Creating the World We Want to Live in: Reconnecting for a Sustainable Future

by

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ABSTRACT

Human connection is fundamental for a shift toward sustainable societies. Small groups of people working in response to their unique conditions and environment can find joy in the co-creation of a shared existence. A collaborative network of related efforts can contribute to a broader understanding of resilience and adaptation, aiming toward a regenerative relationship with the Earth and all species. Such an approach ameliorates both pervasive loneliness and extreme inequity that have grown from modern consumerist individualism, through a strong focus on trust, respect and authenticity. I have created a structure to pursue these goals as an applied Sustainability researcher and artist. First, I present a tool that measures and guides community-based work to support the values of equity, justice, transformation and connection. I follow this with an in-depth process of qualitative inquiry grounded in an applied participatory design project to gain insight on the act of building connection across perceived divides. Finally, I share "The Building Community:" the group and process I formed with formerly homeless individuals who are co-designing a tiny home ecovillage of transitional supportive housing for homeless human beings in the Skid Row neighborhood of downtown Los Angeles. The Building Community method combines Council-style talking circles with elements of Action and Design research in which equal co-learners embark on a fun and challenging journey to nurture housing security, interconnectedness, and sustainability. The results of this research indicate an opportunity for community-based researchers to further incorporate support for the rights of nature, decolonization efforts and preservation of the commons into their projects. Flexible structure, consistency, balanced effort and shared decision making proved to build a strong foundation for group processes centered on trust. Finally, The Building Community showed that intimate local groups can produce abundant and creative

sustainability solutions when partnered with academic guidance and resources. Sustainability scholars have the chance to balance power, amplify voices and make collective visions manifest if they immerse themselves in efforts on the ground.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all who feel the pain of separation, that they may find the light of connection; to all other species on Earth who are counting on the good will of humans for their survival; and to every being who has honored me with their love.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A sustainable society is one that begins with the realization that everything is interconnected.

Humans have projected order and patterns onto this world to make sense of its stimulations and shocks – to soothe our selves with a false sense of control. Covering the Earth's complex systems with concrete and grid cities successfully distracts us from their chaos and entropy, but does not change their reality. We stay in place comfortably with elaborate distributions of food and energy, so that we might focus on meaningful endeavors, but the underlying reality of carrying capacities, bioregion diversity and climate zones remains unchanged. The industries that have grown to uphold this illusion of uniformity are now the targets of our pain and frustration, as the effects of this system grow stronger.

Our basic needs for shelter and sustenance are coupled with those of belonging and love, and shared by all. These foundations are obscured as we seek comfort from perceived attacks and a growing feeling of helplessness. Pain is passed down through generations, expressed through mirrored actions and waiting to be forgiven and released. Often what's standing in our way of adopting more sustainable behaviors is the reaction to our shared suffering as it passes from one to the next. We seek to protect our selves and our loved ones from the passing of violence, perhaps forgetting that the protection is a vital role in its perpetuation. An aggressor cannot exist without a victim.

Small acts of courage disrupt this pattern to wake us up from the dream of destruction and separation – when we reach out across "difference" to connect with others. This cycle of victim and oppressor is a story, and this story can stop being told.

What if we changed our cities and neighborhoods to embrace the concept of connection? To allow for the chance that society can heal? What if we each came to the table, to sit as equals, and allow each other to be heard and seen? The structures that govern this country are manifestations of this story of pain and protection. But the humans who comprise them are part of the same story, too.

Protection – run wild, is accumulation. Accumulation is violent removal for another. For that other, protection is anger and suffering. We are all in turn protecting our selves from each other, each a perceived aggressor by the other, and victim to our selves. Breaking out of this cycle – for moments of shared creation, where we allow the idea of innocence – show us that another way is possible.

This poem is a glimpse of my own personal transformation as a graduate student at Arizona State University, where I've had the chance to work through some of the dark feelings surrounding the idea of climate change, species loss and injustice. As an artist, a larger part of myself realizes that survival is linked to the joy of connection and co-creation. I stand in service to all beings as an academic and practitioner. I draw on the intellectual training I have received in three graduate school programs and my practical experience as a public practice artist to move our society toward a place of healing. Healing and hopefulness emerge for all during the collective processes I've initiated, when we focus on trust, respect, sharing and

experimentation. This dissertation describes my journey to create a framework of ethical guidelines, rigorous, self-reflexive analysis and evidence-based creative methods to support this work. It is comprised of this introduction (Chapter 1), followed by three papers (Chapters 2-4), which are either in review or intended for publication, and a conclusion (Chapter 5).

Chapter Two

Chapter two presents a Criticality Index that measures eleven aspects of ethical community-based sustainability research. I intended to create scaffolding for applied researchers like myself who wish to make a positive shift toward justice, equity and transformation without unknowingly upholding the status quo. The categories were devised through an in-depth review of literature in the fields of environmental justice, American Indian studies, communication, community development, mindfulness, social science, education, planning and sustainability. The literature was analyzed for relevant themes, which were then organized to produce eleven categories with a range of subcategories within each. I used the Index to assess the fifty most recently published case studies in the peer-reviewed journal, Action Research. The review proved that action researchers are demonstrating many of the categories pertaining to ethical interpersonal communication, trust-building and self-reflection. It also revealed opportunities to further increase advocacy for the commons and the rights of nature, support decolonization strategies and promote interdependence. This process provided a strong foundation of action research methods and theory, along with an applicable framework that contributed to the organization of my applied project in downtown Los Angeles (The Building Community).

Chapter Three

In chapter three, I describe in detail the qualitative methodologies used to find meaning within and around The Building Community (TBC), along with the insights that resulted from that analysis. Here, I was curious to learn more about authentic relationships and trust, so that I and other applied Sustainability researchers might employ the lessons learned to help form stronger social networks in our communities. I am compelled to do this work as a connector, bringing an intuition and subjectivity refined by the world of art and design together with the more pragmatic, intellect-centered tools of academia. The process was informed by grounded theory (Charmaz 2014, Dey, 1999, Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Strauss and Corbin, 1998, Strauss 1987), which allows for a wide variety of sources as data in an immersive, iterative and self-reflexive review. I had produced auto-ethnographic field notes (informed by Corbin & Strauss, 2015 and Denzin, 2014) of every weekly TBC workshop, each including a "Council" storytelling circle (see Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009) and an arts-based activity. Qualitative interviews (modeled after Kvale, 2007) were held with five individuals who work closely with volunteers and participants at homeless service organizations in Skid Row. Both the interview transcriptions and field notes were coded, and this data was supplemented by review of relevant literature, observations and secondary sources. Analysis, which also included axial diagrams (see Charmaz, 2014), revealed: intricate negotiations of connection and distance; a strong core of trust based on collaborative effort, sharing and rituals; and consistent demonstrations of righteousness and right relations, among many other insights. The paper can be used as a guideline for other community-based Sustainability researchers who are seeking to combine academic and artistic practices, and who wish to nurture connection through their work.

Chapter Four

The Building Community process and methods are the focus of the fourth chapter. I started TBC with residents of a supportive housing program near my home in downtown Los Angeles, as an artist with a vision for a beautiful and sustainable built environment. The crisis of homelessness in our neighborhood compels us to be of service – especially my collaborators, who each have direct experience of being un-housed. In the course of one year, we met weekly to share stories and co-create a plan for a tiny home ecovillage of transitional supportive housing in Skid Row. I introduced the Council method of communication (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009) and devised a curriculum of participatory art and design that culminated with the creation and exhibition of a scale model village. The process combined elements of Participatory Action Research (Elden & Levin, 1991; Stringer, 2014; Jordan, 2008) and Design Research (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Michel et al., 2007; Rodgers & Yee, 2014; Schupbach and Ball, 2016), which both allow for responsive flexibility and uncertainty while centering the knowledge of participants as equal co-researchers. This intimate pilot project demonstrated the "TBC" method and used qualitative methodologies and the Flourishing Scale (Diener et al, 2009) to measure initial results. Its unique circumstances and the remarkable spirits of the participants highlight the necessity that applied Sustainability projects should be hyper-local and networked. The Building Community is an ongoing project that will soon become a nonprofit organization and grow to support other neighborhood collectives: I felt it was important to describe the steps we have been taking for other researchers who would like to forge their own kindred journeys.

This dissertation presents one series of steps toward the co-creation of sustainable futures, by merging the academic tools of meaning-making with the play

and inspiration of collaborative art and design. I'd like to focus your attention on the importance of trust, respect and connection as a thread that ties each of chapters together. I believe this is key to regenerating social, economic and ecological wellbeing. As a larger community of equals, we can work across disciplines and backgrounds to re-define "wealth" as a rich social network with meaningful local income opportunities, a regenerative built environment and thriving bioregional diversity.

CHAPTER 2

INDEXING ACTION RESEARCH LITERATURE FOR SUSTAINABILITY ETHICS: GUIDING COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH TO ALIGN WITH THE VALUES OF TRANSFORMATION, CONNECTION, EQUITY AND JUSTICE

Abstract

The current discourse on Sustainability science in academia focuses on technological solutions to problems caused by climate change, but evidence suggests the problem goes much deeper. Western society is predicated on unconscious biological drivers that lead to individualism, isolation, consumerism, accumulation, and cycles of fear and oppression. To become sustainable, western society must decolonize: learn to re-connect to each other, other species and the earth; and work toward the realization of equity, justice and indigenous worldviews. This paper seeks to build a framework that will serve as ethical scaffolding for applied Sustainability scholars who wish to pursue this goal.

Introduction

The authors of *Our Common Future*, also known as "The Brundtland Report" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) sought to chart a course toward a future where human progress continues in a more just and equitable, less destructive way. Many scholars and activists argue that today's globalized economy – largely based on the exploitation of natural resources and mass production of material goods - can never be sustainable in this world of richly diverse local realities. According to ecofeminist Vandana Shiva (2005), corporate globalization is creating insecurity, nationalism, extremism and violence by enclosing the commons and generating scarcity: "This scarcity is created by the destruction of

nature's economy and the sustenance economy, where life is nourished maintained, and renewed" (p 12).

Modern humans are far less inclined to confront our collective challenges than our hunter-gatherer ancestors were (Cajete, 2000). Our current social system is predicated on avoidance and escape from reality, as described by Slater (1990): "the result of our social efforts has been to remove the underlying problems of our society farther and farther from daily experience and daily consciousness, and hence to decrease, in the mass of the population, the knowledge, skill, and motivation necessary to deal with them" (p. 19). Disconnection and loneliness have reached epidemic levels in the U.S., attributed in part to the alienating effects of Western individualism and its emphasis on consumption (Hari, 2018; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Slater, 1990). We are contained in uninspired, uniform dwellings and alienated from the sources of the products we consume as well as the effects of our actions on the Earth, each other, and our selves. In the near future, we will be forced into increasingly raw relationships with our neighbors, the elements of nature, and other forms of life: the skills of connection will be essential for our survival.

The social and environmental problems we're facing are complex ("wicked"), and require collaborative action between disciplines, sectors and worldviews (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008; Berkes, 2008; Shiva, 2005). Collaboration teaches people relational skills, to be social as opposed to individualistic, and how to build intimacy (Sholette et al 2018; Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008; Merculieff & Roderick, 2013; Leach, Scoones & Stirling, 2010; Berkes, 2008; Purves & Selzer, 2014; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Hari, 2018; Slater 1990). Creative co-production presents a safe way to address power relations (Sholette et al 2018, Kindle location 4077), come to see social need, assumptions and privilege (Kindle location 4600), and collectively heal from the traumas of violence, inequity, and marginalization (Perry & Szalavitz,

2017). Mindfulness and silence practices can give us the clarity of mind needed to hold such authentic relationships across differences (Toyama, 2015; Shiva, 2005; Zolli & Healy, 2012; Leach, Scoones & Stirling, 2010; Cajete, 2000; Berkes, 2008; WCED, 1987).

This is a process of healing from the trauma of (neo)colonialism, and it entails de-conditioning: unlearning the dominant Western worldview which has forced separations of mind and body, humans from all of life, spirit from the empirical world; and re-integrating language, beliefs, traditions, stories, visions, erased histories and other practices (Ballantyne, 2014; Brayboy et al., 2012; Corntassel, 2012; Duran, 2006; Duran & Duran, 1995; Laenui, 2000; Merculieff & Roderick, 2013; Whyte, 2017; Yellow Bird & Waziyatawin, 2012). Decolonized healing replaces the Western titles of perpetrator and patient with the awareness of self as part of a whole and an agent of change (Duran & Duran, 1995).

We in modern society have the chance to grow into other ways of knowing and being. For instance, we could move toward the indigenous Alaskan concept of the "real human," whose qualities include: "patience, gentleness, soft-spokenness, observation, consideration for people and wildlife, cooperation, non-aggression, the ability to be present in the moment, and a deep reverence and respect for all living things" (Merculieff & Roderick, 2013, p. 12). A "real human community" would consume less and depend upon one another to meet their daily physical and emotional needs. Once-oppressed cultures would be given the chance to heal from historical trauma, and the earth would gain the freedom to regenerate. With the joy of connection, real humans could co-create a built environment that surpasses imagination – one that fits naturally with the earth's bioregions (Forsey, 1993), shares space with other species, encourages interaction, and honors the relational nature of reality (Wilson, 2008).

The lead author of this article is a public practice artist and Sustainability scholar, seeking to create an evolving ethical framework for immersive community collaborations. Thus, this study compares recent Participatory Action Research (PAR) case studies with the critical theories of environmental, social justice and Indigenist activist scholars. We present a criticality measurement tool that comprises eleven of the most prominent recommendations of scholars who center equity, social justice and indigenous worldviews as the fundamental definition of sustainability. Criticality is defined here as "involving skillful judgment as to truth, merit, etc., " (Dictionary.com, 2018) and applied through Freire's consciousness-raising framework and the Marxist determination to "maximize human freedom from political and economic domination" (Kaplan, 1991). The tool is used to assess the extent to which the authors of 50 recent case studies published in Action Research Journal aligned their work with values like justice, equity and egalitarianism. We share the results of this assessment as well as valuable lessons and revelations revealed in the literature. In conclusion, we offer some recommendations on how to employ these values as a research-practitioner, by building connection across differences while co-creating a shared vision for a more sustainable future.

In Search of an Ethical Yardstick

Sustainability researchers who work directly with community members have the chance to build on the lessons learned in the field of Participatory Action Research (Wittmayer & Schäpke, 2014; Lang et al., 2012; Miller, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2006). Traditionally, PAR facilitators design interventions around a problem in society that rely on the participation of individuals it is affecting, intending to educate and inspire social change (Green et al., 1995). The most successful PAR projects are co-developed with the people involved as equals, to

support their self-determined needs and desires (Stringer, 2014) and allow for the re-negotiation of power and resources (Grant, Nelson & Mitchell, 2008). As an approach that was developed to foster equity and justice, PAR represents a constructive foundation from which to refine a practical framework for ethical applied Sustainability scholarship.

The following represents a review of literature across the fields of planning, communication, environmental justice, racial literacy, American Indian Studies, Sustainability, community organizing, social science, education, mindfulness, and community development, with the aim of refining the lead author's operational values that have evolved through a career of socially engaged artistic practice. The review began with publications that were referred to the lead author by experts in the above-mentioned fields, from authors such as Shelly Arnstein (1969), Paolo Freire (1970), Vine Deloria Jr. (1969) and Vandana Shiva (2005). These readings were scanned for salient points in the drive to understand humanity, combat disparity, rectify injustice, find peace, and build a brighter future (lead author's operational values). Common underlying themes were identified by creating a code book which progressed from granular ideas toward synthesized categories. These categories then called for the review of additional resources for further elucidation – supplemental literature was recommended by the advising experts. At this point, the codebook was re-organized to reveal 11 major categories, and subcategories emerged as common themes within each (see sample codebook section below, followed by a description of each established category).

Category	Situation	Suggestion
Challenge oppression	d. What people in power believe is simply an expression or reflection of their desire to retain and enhance their power (Gee)	e. Challenging cultural deficit idea – based on effect of generations of oppression on the minority (What it means to be white)
	b. Calls for redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. (Arnstein)	b. Calling out misrepresentation & invisibility of minorities, popular acceptance of oppression, internalized oppression/dominance, enforcement by institutions (What it means to be white)
Call out misrepresentation		c. Strive for clarity about the reality of power, see and question our positions, overcome socialization (What it means to be white)
Clarify power		a. the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community. Here's a more applied definition of damage-centered research: research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation. (Tuck)
Overcome socialization		g. Acknowledge segregation, racial pay discrimination, racial housing & lending discrimination that affects school quality, patterns of forceful dispossession from land (land is wealth) – theft of land led to white wealth – then laws built to protect landowners (Uprooting Racism)
Account for inequities		h. Recognize uneven playing field: US funding discrimination led to 98% of all farmland to be owned by white people. Infrastructure followed white flight to suburbs after civil rights movement. Heavily polluting industries are located in communities of color and native lands (Uprooting Racism)
Challenge systemic injustice		j. Raise awareness/advocacy about unfair placement of waste facilities & dumps, routing of commercial traffic; exposing poor neighborhoods to cancer risks for lack of resources/agency to defend (Kozol)
		k. Rise up against relocation of homeless families to poor neighborhoods – concentration of illness and poverty – disinvestment in local hospitals that are crowded, filthy, poor quality care, can't get accreditation. (Kozol)
		e. Theory vs experience: AAVE (African American Vernacular English)/Ebonics. Pluralistic society? Who's language are we perpetuating and why? (Gee)

Figure 1.1 Sample Section from Final Literature Review Codebook

1. Encourage Connection Through Dialogue

Sub-sections: 1) use language wisely; 2) allow for inner reflection; 3) negotiate meaning; and 4) build trust.

Modern culture today has left many people hungry for community, after bureaucracy and commercialization has depersonalized our everyday exchanges (Slater, 1990) and politics have effectively shifted our focus from leading a meaningful life toward debates around freedom, prosperity and capital (Lakoff, 1980). Those with economic resources are often the most deeply affected as products of generations-long separation from their lineage, history and places of origin (Forsey, 1993). Older cultures (Hartmann, 2007), and those on the margins of dominant society (Forsey, 1993) tend to best retain a wealth of close relationships. Most of us, however, can successfully avoid human interaction in our profit driven neighborhood layouts, segregated historically by class, age and race (Norwood and Smith, 1995): we have access to the world of information, but are starving for wisdom, time, spirit and support (Hartmann, 2007). The modern human is dissatisfied, cynical, apathetic, and searching for something more out of life (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008).

In response, many scholars have developed dialogue-based practices aiming to remedy isolation with reconnection and strengthened relationships. One critical approach has been to move away from the literal to the spoken word - to free language from the hegemonic structure of standardized vocabulary (Smitherman & Smitherman-Donaldson, 1996) - and allow for the democratic negotiation of meaning in context (Lakoff, 1980; Gee, 2017). Good facilitators will share their personal truths, building a space of trust in which participants can reflect on their own values, motivations, and the impacts they have on others; from here they might reach beyond their mental constructs collectively to connect among true selves (Vidyarthi and Wilson, 2008). After long-term divisiveness and misunderstanding, effective dialogue helps to unveil unspoken beliefs and assumptions – it is seldom the case that people will choose to harm others once they gain clarity on the perspectives involved (Gee, 2012). These communication skills are essential if we are to address complex challenges together, as "committed testers" who challenge their own perspectives on a journey toward shared understanding (Gee, 2017).

2. Re-Create and Preserve the Commons

Sub-sections: 1) support local economy; 2) strengthen local decision-making; and 3) conserve public land ownership.

Unsustainability in human culture began with our impulse to create surpluses, rather than being content with the resources we already had (Slater, 1990). If we had an idea of what is "enough," we might have created a modern culture that has time for pursuing interests, joy and meaning (Hartmann, 2007). While Industrialism held a promise for this sort of liberation, the mechanics of progress drove our leaders toward today's ever-increasing privatization and commoditization. Globalism has had both perceived positive and negative implications. For instance, it has allowed for

the broad proliferation of knowledge, innovation, medicine and understanding (Sen, 2002). Yet, it has also eliminated livelihoods, cultures, language, power and biodiversity (Shiva, 2005). Indeed, globalism's unequal distribution of opportunity, exploitation of resources, and masking of cause and effect has been linked to the rise of extremism and terrorism (Moghaddam, 2008; Nassar, 2009; Zimmermann, 2011; Shiva, 2005).

Sustainability researchers can play a small part in counteracting these forces, if they support and advocate efforts to strengthen local economies and decision-making structures. The process may entail some sacrifice of conveniences for the sake of re-building community integrity, as exploitative relationships are deconstructed over time and people gain the skills and power to make their own decisions collectively (Vidyarthi and Wilson, 2008). One vehicle that can be used to confront globalization is the land trust, which can restore control of shared property and protect it from development, speculation, degradation and inflation, effectively allowing communities to conserve their natural spaces and ensure the affordability of their housing (Christian, 2003; Norwood and Smith, 1995; McLaughlin & Davidson, 1985). In some cases, local government can intervene by acquiring delinquent properties and "leasing" them for a negligible amount to community –based nonprofits for a similar effect (Linn, 2007). Community groups might also choose to intervene through their economic systems, by implementing local and negative interest currencies, eliminating profitable ownership of the commons, internalizing social and environmental costs, providing a basic income, supporting peer-to-peer lending, and de-growing the economy through sharing, reduced consumption, bartering, and trading (Eisenstein, 2011).

3. Nourish Creativity

Sub-sections: 1) use collective design; 2) access inner knowledge; 3) build critical thinking skills; and 4) develop agency.

The public school system in the United States is largely designed to provide information for students to consume, leading many to leave high school without the critical thinking skills necessary for civic engagement. A focus on standardized testing has prioritized memorization at the cost of higher order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Smith & Szymanski, 2013). Some teachers believe they are imparting critical thinking skills, when in fact they are merely ensuring that their students can comprehend assigned materials (Choy & Cheah, 2009). Even those educators who are committed to critical pedagogy often fall into the trap of debating available choices, failing to promote the "intellectual autonomy" needed to create new alternatives (Kaplan, 1991). Sears and Parsons (1991) point to a gap between those who emphasize theory and others who privilege practice, while both are crucial to fully realize Dewey's conception of critical thinking. In time, we have hindered our ability to think contextually, internalized our identities as passive objects, and forgotten the joy of inquiry (Freire, 1970).

Applied Sustainability researchers who wish to support the movement toward egalitarianism might choose to promote creativity. Artists and researchers can use creative processes to help community groups see their situations from a different angle, from where they can solidify their hopes and dreams and translate them into policy and action (NEA, 2016). Whether through dialogue or collective action, approaching a problem together allows people to experience their ability to transform reality (Freire, 1970). A creative endeavor makes manifest each person's world of experience as a product that surpasses any individual's limitations. As an iterative process, collective design can reveal the implications and conflicts of people's varying

ideas and desires, allowing the group to stretch their imaginations and set their priorities (Day, 2004). Reaching beyond the verbal, the creative process invites sacred knowing to transform both the object or problem and everyone involved (Cajete, 2000). The new experience could help people shift from frustration or helplessness to a state of openness to the possibility of change (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008).

4. Honor Complexity

Sub-sections: 1) perspectives broaden understanding; 2) diversity helps us get closer to peace; and 3) knowledge is relational.

Social and political discourse across the globe is increasingly divided, as privately held media agencies and social network echo chambers enflame the gulfs of bias. It is crucial that we seek out diversity in culture and opinions at this time, to create the conditions for peace (Shiva, 2005). Conflicting views may be threatening to many due to the individualist, competitive and suspicious tendencies cultivated by globalized modernism (Slater, 1990; Hartmann, 2007). If we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and accountable to one another, we might learn to see differences as necessary ingredients for understanding (Forsey, 1993).

As applied researchers, we might consider the Indigenous idea that all of life is a complex of infinite, equal relationships – that it is impossible to see all of the connections that comprise a person's viewpoint – thus, hierarchy and judgment of worth and value is not an option (Wilson, 2008). Intelligence is collective, and every person's experiences and interpretations are essential (Gee, 2017). We might learn to see complexity as delightful and stimulating, even though we may be inclined to seek simplicity (Brown, 2017). Our common purpose is to better understand reality: with each of our viewpoints, we get closer to truth (Wilson, 2008) in an ongoing

journey toward peace (Gee, 2017). Researchers can best support a community through its desires by becoming familiar with its complexity and contradictions (Tuck, 2009) and learning together in direct involvement (Wilson, 2008), rather than imposing a generalized and impersonal structure.

5. Protect the Rights of Nature

Sub-sections: 1) challenge private ownership; 2) learn from touching the earth; and 3) share resources equitably.

If we are to adapt to rising sea levels, shifting climate zones and the migration and loss of species, our ideas of exclusivity and dominion over nature must change (Slater, 1990). It is unfair that nature is forced to suffer human's mass consumption, destruction and pollution; we have the responsibility to defend its right to flourish (Campbell and Linzey, 2016). As researchers, we can advocate for the planet as a commons, as in Vandana Shiva's "living economy," where local production ensures equitable distribution, meaningful livelihoods and protection from devastation and waste (Shiva, 2005). The Anishinaabe people demonstrate a reverent relationship with nature, counting their trees as members of their society and accounting for their generous "ecosystem services," such as: the sharing of oxygen, shade and sustenance, and their absorption of carbon (Kimmerer, 2013). Indeed, the idea of a "nature" that is separate from humans is foreign to indigenous communities around the world (Cajete, 2015; Duran & Duran, 1995) – in damaging our environment, plants and other species, we are directly damaging our selves. This understanding can become universal through direct contact with the Earth, which is alive and "conscious," and of which we have always been a part (Cajete, 2000).

6. Protect Individual and Community Sovereignty

Sub-sections: 1) create local laws; 2) participatory planning; 3) prioritize local/traditional knowledge; and 4) work with desire-based frameworks.

Corporate, political and social interests are competing for the rights to local resources in most areas of the planet today. Communities are struggling to protect their territories from exploitation for oil, gas and tarsands, while fighting to retain their traditional practices in the face of corporate over-harvesting (Klein, 2015). Globalization has taken economic decisions out of the hands of local governments (Shiva, 2005), and community members with power assert knowledge claims over others in order to maintain their unequal share of natural resources (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007).

Researchers can lend their voices to the cause of sovereignty by supporting communities' self-organizing efforts. The goal is to facilitate transformation through clearly defined forms and scopes of participation (Cornwall, 2011) and self-reflexive awareness of one's position as an "outsider" who might have an inclination to project his or her own cultural values (Wilson, 2007). Research protocols can be designed to allow for the subversion of existing power structures in dialogue (Davidson-Hunt, 2007), and local decision-making mechanisms can be developed (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008) to ensure the inclusion of the "have-nots" (Arnstein, 1969). Informed researchers can work with communities to add bills of rights to their city charters and object to the laws that favor developers; this process builds trust, commitment and faith (Campbell & Linzey, 2016). It is repeatedly the practices of community-based resource management founded on local knowledge that prove more sustainable and equitable than those imposed by authority (Berkes, 2008).

7. Build Community Capacity

Sub-sections: 1) celebrate existing assets; 2) approach multi-level capacity; 3) prioritize wellness; 4) allow for total citizen control; and 5) consider context.

Successful community development relies in part on the skills and values of the researcher/facilitator, and the choice to focus on peoples' dreams rather than their suffering (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008). Many roadblocks impede the process, including racism, sexism, resistance from the status quo, inadequate knowledge, networks or resources, and historical disappointment and frustration (Arnstein, 1969). The talented facilitator will help communities navigate these obstacles and establish their own means of self-management, eventually rendering themselves obsolete (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008).

The extent of capacity-building frameworks that have been tested are too numerous to include here, but the best of them promote Arnstein's "Levels of Citizen Power" (1969). Partnership works when communities have the time and energy to commit, and delegated power allows for control over part of the plan, but full "Citizen Control" is the only level that fully paves the way for true transformation. Researchers are urged to work holistically, considering mitigating factors and the community's connectedness, dedication, decision-making infrastructure, and ability to work toward a shared goal, while cultivating the agency of its individuals, organizations and "networks of association" (Chaskin et al., 2001). Wilson (2007) suggests that successful community research is inherently relationship building, while Cajete (2015) calls for the centering of wellness for all community members as the goal of any organized activity. Artist-researchers can help to highlight a community's strengths and translate its essence into process and form, thus strengthening its chances to persevere in the face of gentrification (NEA, 2016). Place-based learning communities reach even further, to support people in

identifying their own needs and garnering resources to address them (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007). Finally, Cloutier and Pfeiffer's Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (2016) gives residents the tools to increase their access to happiness by manipulating their physical and social environments.

8. Support Process of Decolonization

Sub-sections: 1) process is self-driven; 2) return stolen lands and histories; 3) support people-driven action; 4) account for stolen resources; 5) celebrate culture.

Western researchers often unwittingly perpetuate imperialism in their involvement with non-western communities merely through their belief in objective, measureable reality (Brayboy et al., 2012). To begin a supportive allyship with Indigenous communities in research, we must first be clear that knowledge comes from more than just intellect – it is impossible to separate ourselves from our senses, intuition, and motives (Wilson, 2007). Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies respond to the colonial assumptions that are inherent in western research, and seek to support efforts to reclaim land, histories, beliefs and practices that were stolen by Eurocentric culture (Brayboy et al., 2012). These actions are derived through a concentric process of decolonization, which also includes rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming and commitment (Laenui, 2000). Non-Indigenous researchers are advised to take only a peripheral, supportive role in these sensitive proceedings, leaving full ownership and direction in the hands of the Indigenous communities themselves. At the same time, we can work to decolonize our own minds by reconnecting to our own indigenous ancestry, remembering the history of how we arrived where we are, reconciling and reaching out to indigenous communities, and renewing our connections with the earth, culture and community

(Awakening the Horse People). As allies, we can play a role in making connections and leveraging resources when given the opportunity.

9. Challenge Oppression

Sub-sections: 1) call out misrepresentation; 2) clarify power; 3) overcome socialization; 4) account for inequities; 5) challenge systemic injustice.

Practice-based researchers have the chance to reveal the self-perpetuating nature of power underneath the false messages of well-meaning leaders (Gee, 2012). Applied projects can directly re-distribute power by deliberately including those who have been disenfranchised and marginalized (Arnstein, 1969). As facilitators, we can challenge the mainstream idea of minority cultural deficits, call out misrepresentation and invisibilities, and draw attention to the phenomena of popular acceptance of oppression, internalized oppression and dominance, and enforcement by institutions (DiAngelo, 2012). Steering clear from damage-based narratives will disrupt the association between minority communities and pathological suffering (Tuck, 2009). In dialogue, we can acknowledge segregation, racial pay and lending practices (Kivel, 2011), as well as discriminatory placement of hazardous waste, truck routes and industries (Kozol, 1995). We can point out forceful dispossession (Kivel, 2011), intentional concentrations of poverty, disinvestment and unequal access to land ownership (Kozol, 1995). From a position of leadership, researchers are able to clarify power relations, help the collective to overcome socialized notions of race and class (DiAngelo, 2012), and leverage resources to directly support the needs and desires of the under-represented.

10. Approach Through Non-Duality/Inter-Dependence

Sub-sections: 1) honor multiple ways of knowing; 2) ideas belong to the cosmos of inter-relations; 3) inner shifts are necessary for collective change; 4) allow for mystery; and 5) everything is sacred and connected.

In this individualistic modern world, it is easy to forget that everything, and everyone, is inter-connected (Wilson, 2007). The epidemic of homelessness in the U.S. is symbolic of our dysfunction – isolation, competition and long-distance families have ripped holes in our social fabric (Norwood & Smith, 1995). Underneath the race to survive, we share a need to belong, to contribute, and to be fully appreciated by society (Gee, 2017). We can begin to bridge those gaps as researchers with humility, if we avoid the compulsion to "give" to people, in favor of joining together to problem-solve and learn as equals (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008).

Authentic communication helps us to see the sacredness and connections between everything, and with that comes the responsibility to nurture that understanding (Shiva, 2005). Modern society needs to heal from the idea of separation, which has caused us to lose touch with the natural cycles of life and death and the impacts of our actions on each other, other species, and the Earth (Duran & Duran, 1995). It is impossible to isolate one human out of context in Indigenous belief, similarly to Zen Buddhism, which negates the idea of a duality between self and others (Suzuki, 1977). Researchers can help communities return to that understanding by respecting multiple ways of knowing (Brayboy et al., 2012), allowing mystery to exist beyond our ability to label and describe (Duran & Duran, 1995), and revealing the relational nature of reality (Wilson, 2007). Together, we can promote the inner shifts that are necessary for trust, connectedness, and collective change (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008).

11. Proceed With an Open Mind and Heart

Sub-sections: 1) be vulnerable; 2) be present; 3) use language mindfully; and 4) be accountable.

On entering into a collaborative research relationship, Duran (2006) might remind the scholar to stop the mind, in order to see the world as it is instead of how we wish it to be. Wilson (2007) might ask that they check their heart, to make sure their motives are pure. According to Suzuki (1977), we should express ourselves as we truly are, without trying to change ourselves, and to strive to find the truth of the present moment: in Zazen, reality is a direct experience. Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies would ask that researchers be relational, responsible, respectful, reciprocal, and concerned with fulfilling their roles and obligations in relationship (Brayboy et al., 2012). Strategies like talking circles and action research will help in this regard (Wilson, 2007), but only if the aim is to do good for all involved (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007). As researchers, we can hold ourselves accountable not only to the knowledge we gain from our experiences, but to the living beings those ideas will influence in the world as well (Brayboy et al., 2012). We can choose to approach research as a ceremony, that shrinks the distances between each other and the universe, raises our consciousness and deepens our understanding of the world (Wilson, 2007).

Most importantly, facilitators should learn to be accepting of our selves and others, nourishing our own and others' needs and allowing our true selves to break through our limiting attitudes and beliefs (Greenwald, 1980). We can practice vulnerability and generosity to strengthen our connections with others, seek to be seen and to be humble, accept all of our contradictions, and learn to ask for and receive what we need (Brown, 2017).

Full Index

The eleven categories of criticality were first established via a thorough literature review. Next, they were compiled into an index tool (Table 1.1) to measure the fifty most recent case studies published by Action Research Journal at the time of this writing. A five-level metric was created as an adaptation of Sarah White's (1996) four prongs of participatory efficacy, which included: 1) Nominal; 2) Instrumental; 3) Representative; and 4) Transformative. The score of zero was added to indicate when the publication does not show evidence that the category (or sub-category) of criticality was considered during the design, implementation or discussion of the research project. To earn a score of one, the authors must consider the category/subcategory "Nominally" – most likely mentioned only in the background or introduction sections. A score of two reveals "Instrumental" consideration, as the publication mentions or indirectly refers to the category/subcategory in the discussion and/or future research sections. Level three is reserved for research that integrates the criticality category/subcategory in a superficial, or "Representative" way. To achieve a score of 4 in any category/subcategory, the publication must demonstrate that the themes were fully interwoven into the research in a "Transformative" way that makes a real impact on the communities and individuals participating.

Table 1.1 Criticality Index

Index	
0	No consideration
1	Nominal/ Mentioned only in background
2	Instrumental/ Mentioned only in discussion/ future research
3	Representative/ Integrated into research structure in a superficial way
4	Transformative/ Fully Interwoven – has real impact

Table 1.2 Criticality Index Categories and Subcategories

Categories
1. Encourage connection through dialogue • Use language wisely • Allow for inner reflection • Negotiate meaning • Build trust
2. Re-create and preserve the commons • Support local economy • Strengthen local decision-making • Conserve public land ownership
3. Nourish creativity • Use collective design • Access inner knowledge • Build critical thinking skills • Develop agency
4. Honor complexity • Use perspectives to broaden understanding • Nurture diversity to get closer to peace • Approach knowledge relationally
5. Protect rights of nature • Challenge private ownership • Learn from touching the earth • Share resources equitably
6. Protect individual and community sovereignty • Create local decision making systems • Participatory planning • Prioritize local/traditional knowledge • Work with desire-based frameworks
7. Build community capacity • Celebrate existing assets • Approach multi-level capacity • Prioritize wellness • Allow for total citizen control • Consider context
8. Support process of decolonization • Process is self-driven • Return stolen lands and histories • Support people-driven initiatives • Account for stolen resources • Celebrate culture
9. Challenge oppression

- Call out misrepresentation
- Clarify power
- Overcome socialization
- Account for inequities
- Challenge systemic injustice

10. Approach through non-duality/ Inter-dependence

- Honor multiple ways of knowing
- Ideas belong to the cosmos of inter-relations
- Inner shifts are necessary for collective change
- Shift from individual to collective
- Allow for mystery
- Everything is sacred and connected

11. Proceed with an open mind and heart

- Be vulnerable
- Be present
- Use language mindfully
- Be accountable

Each of the fifty most recent case studies published in Action Research Journal was analyzed inductively using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2011). Explicit or tacit indicators of the consideration of criticality categories/subcategories (see Table 1.2) were highlighted, and measurement was determined according to the metric described above. Subtotals were calculated for each of the 11 categories, and these figures were translated into Criticality Category Scores within a range of 0 – 100 using the formula n(.0x), where n is the category subtotal and x equals the number of subcategories included in the category. Total Criticality Scores were calculated as the sum of each category subtotal multiplied by 1.84 (the total number of subcategories across the entire index divided by 100) in order to produce a number between 0 and 100.

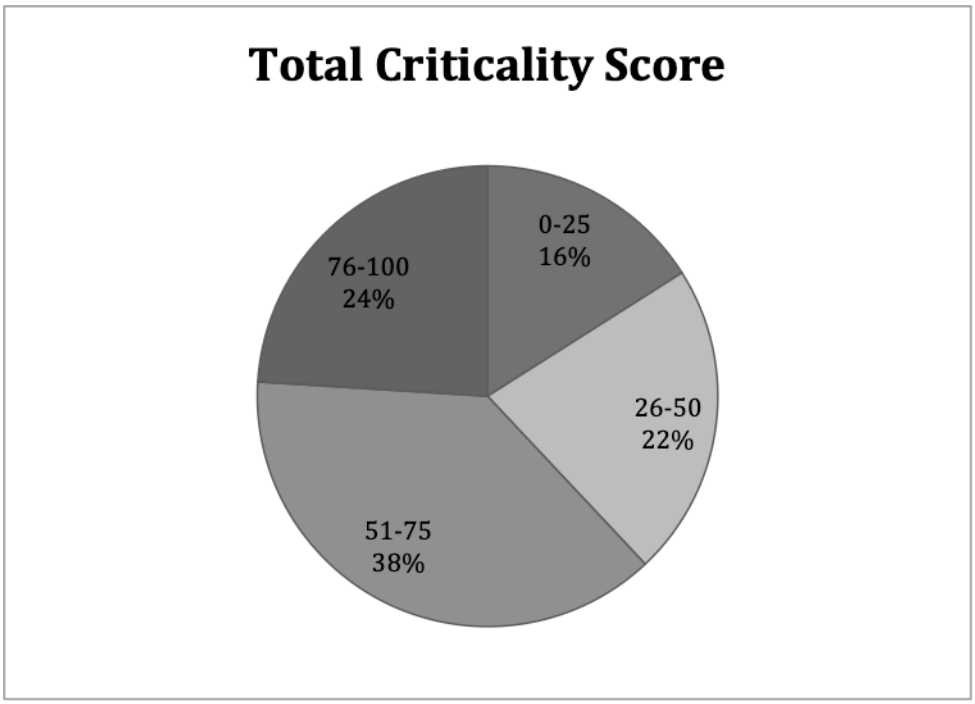


Figure 1.2 Chart Showing Breakdown of 50 Publications by Total Criticality Score

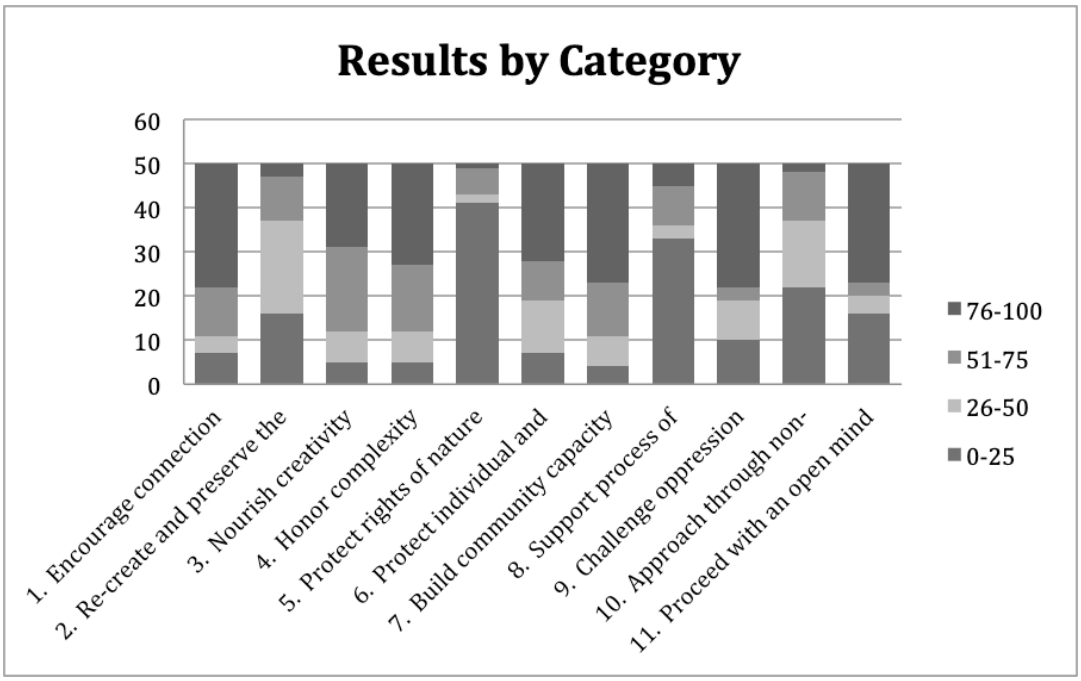


Figure 1.3 Chart Showing Breakdown of Criticality Scores by Category

Table 1.3 Table of Category Rankings From 1 (Most Popular) to 11 (Least Popular)

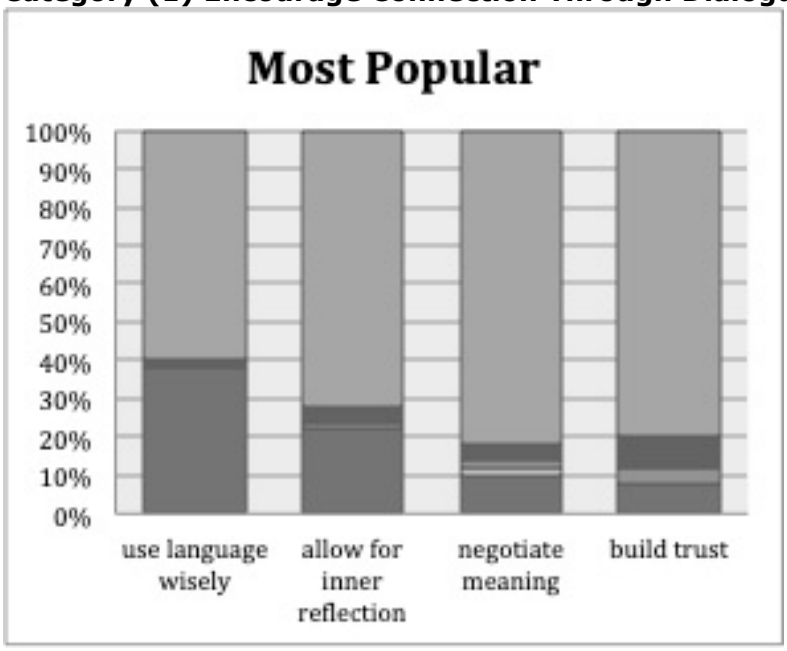
Ranking	Category	
1	1	Encourage connection through dialogue
2	9	Challenge oppression
3	7	Build community capacity
4	11	Proceed with an open mind and heart
5	4	Honor complexity
6	6	Protect individual and community sovereignty
7	3	Nourish creativity
8	8	Support process of decolonization
9	2	Re-create and preserve the commons
10	10	Approach through non-duality/ inter-dependence
11	5	Protect rights of nature

Figure 1.2 shows the breakdown of the 50 *Action Research* articles assessed for this publication by Total Criticality Score: a majority of 19 (38%) achieved a total score between 51-75%, followed by 12 (24%) that scored between 76-100%, 11 (22%) at 26-50% and 8 (16%) that received the lowest scores of 0-25%. In figure 1.3, the measurements for each Criticality Category are displayed according to how many articles scored between 76-100%, 51-75%, 26-50%, and 0-25%. Six categories proved to be most highly addressed in the literature, achieving majority scores of 76-100%: 1) Encourage connection through dialogue; 4) Honor complexity; 6) Protect individual and community sovereignty; 7) Build community capacity; 9) Challenge oppression; and 11) Proceed with an open mind and heart. Category 3, Nourish creativity, was also prevalent, with 38 (76%) articles receiving scores above 50%. These results are consistent with the nature of participatory research methodologies, which are meant to foster equality and positive social change through dialogue, reflexivity, and empowering participants to understand and address their current circumstances (Stringer, 2014, Gillis & Jackson, 2002, Quixley, 2008).

The Least Popular Categories

As seen in figure 1.3, categories 5) Protect the rights of nature, 8) Support process of decolonization, and 10) Approach through non-duality/inter-dependence, were fulfilled between 76-100% by only one, five and two articles respectively. This mainly reflects the specificity of these categories, which are not generally applicable to all action research projects; category ten represents subtle internal processes that are at best tacit and most often omitted from scientific publications.

Category (1) Encourage Connection Through Dialogue



Category (5) Protect the Rights of Nature

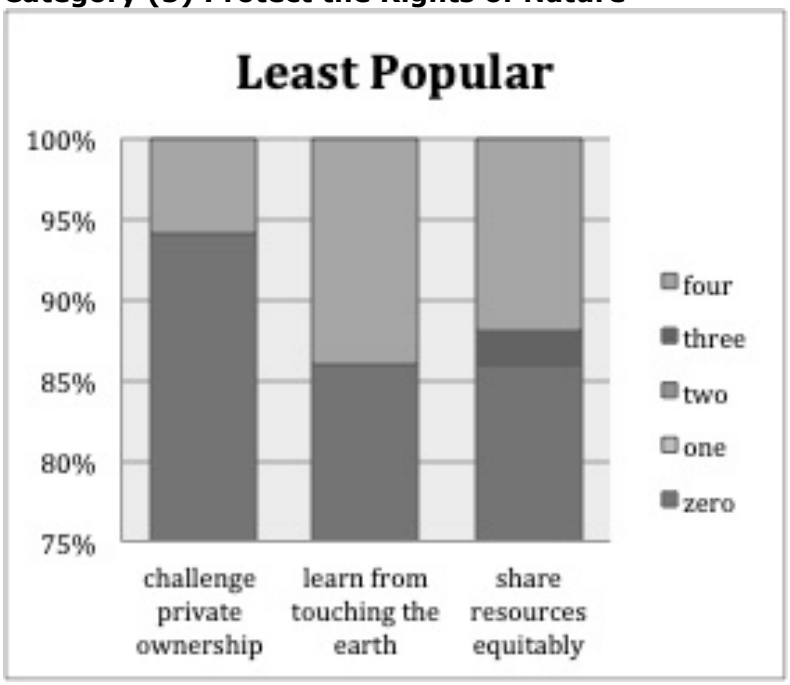


Figure 1.4 Chart Showing Most and Least Popular Categories Including Subcategory Results, Scored from 0-4

Table 1.3 lists each category according to its popularity ranking. For the sake of brevity, we have chosen to describe the results for only the most and least popular categories here. Figure 1.4 compares the two categories and reveals the results for each of their subcategories, scored from zero to four. Category one, "Encourage connection through dialogue," was most commonly addressed in the literature: 28 of the articles assessed, or 56%, scored higher than 75%, 11 (22%) received scores between 51-75%, 4 (8%) scored between 26-50% and 7 (14%) measured less then 25%. 41 (82%) of the articles received the highest possible score (4) in the subcategory "negotiate meaning," 40 (80%) scored 4 in "build trust," 36 (72%) received the highest score in "allow for inner reflection," and 30 (60%) scored 4 in "use language wisely." Relatively high numbers of articles received zero points in the subcategories "use language wisely" and "allow for inner

reflection" (19 and 11 respectively), as these intentions are mostly gauged tacitly through descriptions of the research process and researchers' self-reflections, and some articles featured a lower level of specificity in these sections. Most of the authors anchored their research to the theoretical underpinnings of PAR, which emphasize a dialogical relationship between the researcher(s) and the people who are affected by the problem or situation being studied, so that they are equal co-researchers who join in the construction of new knowledge (Fals-Borda, 1985; Montero, 2000).

Category five, "Protect the rights of nature," received the lowest scores: 41 (82%) of articles satisfied this category from 0-25%; 2 (4%) scored between 26-50%; 6 (12%) received 51-75%; and only 1 (2%) reached the 76-100% bracket. In the "challenge private ownership" subcategory, 47 articles (94%) received zero points and three (6%) scored four; "learn from touching the earth" did not appear in 43 (86%) of the papers but 7 (14%) earned a score of 4 in this subcategory; and 43 (86%) did not mention or allude to "sharing resources equitably," while one paper (2%) earned a score of 3 (Representative/ integrated into research structure in a superficial way) and the remaining six reached the full four points in the subcategory. This category generally scored low because most of the assessed case studies described research that was conducted indoors, with the majority dealing with abstract or intellectual matters as opposed to the earth's physicality. The limitations imposed by sponsorship, funding parameters and partner organizational structures may explain why the "challenge private ownership" subcategory was very rarely acknowledged and never fully realized in the studies. However the results in the subcategory "share resources equitably" were surprisingly low considering the potential for action research to be "mutually defined and owned," (Langdon & Larweh, 2015) egalitarian (Padilha et al, 2016) and transformative (Wamba, 2017).

Challenges

These criticality scores should not necessarily be used to judge the ethics behind the authors' intentions and practices, as there are many factors that influenced the measurements. Some articles were focused on particular aspects of the research so that it was impossible to assess criticality in areas not addressed in the writing. Organizational development projects had a more limited reach and tighter protocols that precluded their involvement in unrelated categories, while health research often had larger samples but more technical and restricted objectives. The categories that are revealed through nuanced, tacit language (such as approach through non-duality/ interdependence) could have been lost in translation to English, or in the formal academic choice of words and focus on validity, replicability, analytic methods, etc. Whereas some authors excluded self-reflective information, or focused on third parties, that does not necessarily mean that they were not exemplifying criticality in practice (leading to lower scores in categories such as 11) Proceed with an open mind and heart). Finally, simply not all categories applied to every project.

Revelations

The process of assessment suggested a number of additional subcategories that could potentially be added to the Criticality Index in future applications. Category one, "encourage connection through dialogue," might be expanded with a subcategory for encouraging debate or dissent, which is also relative to category four, "honor complexity." "Embrace tension" is a possible extension of category 3, "nourish creativity," as tension is often an indicator of transcending comfort zones into emergent possibilities. To effectively protect the rights of nature (category 5),

the Index might also assess researchers' efforts to resist corporate pollution and exploitation. A crucial element of protecting individual and community sovereignty (category 6) is to ensure that a research project is applicable, which also relates to category 8, "support process of decolonization," and its subcategory, "process is self-driven."

Two additional subcategories emerged for category seven ("build community capacity"): "improve access to resources/opportunities," and "promote collaboration." Category 9, "challenge oppression," could be expanded with subcategories for disrupting dominant discourse, building bridges or changing the balance of power, and increasing access (particularly economic). The subcategory, "acknowledge impermanence," might enhance researchers' efforts to "approach through non-duality/ inter-dependence" (category 10), while promoting the systems thinking necessary for the shift toward sustainability. Finally, three subcategories may be added to category 11, "proceed with an open mind and heart," encouraging researchers to "be reciprocal", "use humility," and "be transparent."

Humanizing Research

Community-based Sustainability scientists can use this Index as a framework to shift toward a more critical baseline for their research. While the belief systems, interactions and habits of humans deserve much attention as having driven the planet into climate crisis, we can build time and space into our work to consider and protect the rights of nature and other species. We could use our positions as researchers to leverage resources that are needed to re-build and safeguard the commons, in solidarity with the communities who invite our participation. Our work can demonstrate the importance of the world's diverse perspectives by overtly discussing subtle dynamics, non-duality and mystery. Finally, our work can further

decolonization efforts if we connect with original communities and follow their lead toward the reclamation of stolen lands, traditions and histories.

The lead author is applying the Criticality Index to a long-term participatory design project in the Skid Row community of downtown Los Angeles. By invitation, she formed a weekly group workshop with permanent supportive housing residents who have experienced homelessness. They use talking circles and hands-on creative methods to build trust, formulate their individual and collective ideas, and take steps toward shared goals. Much uncertainty, failure and discovery surrounds the process, in which every participant is equally essential. Calling themselves "The Building Community," the group has developed extensive plans to create a tiny home ecovillage of transitional housing for people living on the streets in their neighborhood: they are establishing partnerships, microenterprises and a corporation to support their efforts. The ecovillage will be held as a community land trust amidst rapid gentrification, built with the earth and re-used materials: it will regenerate urban soil, vegetation and natural habitat, and provide an inviting and inspiring oasis with on-site support for individuals and families who seek to re-connect with the larger society. Most importantly, the project arose from lived experience, hard lessons learned and a strong shared sense of hope and possibility for a more equitable and sustainable future.

CHAPTER 3

SHOWING UP AND RECONNECTING FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONNECTION ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVIDES IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

Abstract

Societal healing happens when people feel heard, seen and appreciated. This paper describes the lessons learned when an artist, who is also an applied Sustainability researcher, overcame her own fears and connected with her neighbors in downtown Los Angeles who had experienced homelessness on Skid Row. Together they embarked on a mission to realize a new shared reality that is regenerative, inspirational, and fair. Qualitative analytic methods were applied to field notes from one year of weekly workshops combining dialogue with creative activities; this data was supplemented with observations, reviews of literature, and interviews with five homeless service providers. Analysis showed that connection is a constant negotiation, and that trust is built through consistency, showing up, following through, contributing, and going with the flow. Volunteers connect with participants when they truly care, get to know them and treat them as equals. The most impactful element of the project was participants' appreciation for having the space to fully express themselves, be seen as capable adults (not labeled with limitation), give back to their friends who are still struggling, and take part in creating something good.

Introduction

The external changes called for in realization of "sustainability" in western culture require a significant inner shift. Globalism and the economic growth

paradigm continue to feed an expanding need for resources for which indigenous communities and the environment are exploited (Whyte, 2013 & 2017; Reo & Parker, 2013; Maldonado et al., 2013). In the meantime, millions are suffering from loneliness and social isolation in modern society (Hari, 2018; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018; McPherson et al, 2006): a health risk shown to be linked with mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015; House, Landis & Umberson, 1988). Without a rich, grounded social network, an awareness of history and ties to the land, the modern person lives in a sheltered nuclear household, stuck in a loop of fleeting gratification (Putnam, 2000; Haidt, 2006, Slater, 1990). Those who can't afford the consumerist lifestyle are increasingly pressed, while globalism makes it difficult for us to connect our actions with their effects on others (Shiva, 2005). The design of our homes, businesses, and public structures and the lack of common spaces in our communities reinforce this separation (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977). The question becomes, how can Sustainability scholars help heal this rift?

The fields of development, planning and community psychology help us understand how people move beyond what we already know. Many have demonstrated that new possibilities can be realized when groups come together to acknowledge injustice, allow all voices to be heard, and work toward equity (Fussell, 1996; Perkins, 1995; Pigg, 2002, Gone, Hartman, & Sprague, 2017; Dufrene & Coleman, 1994; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). With trust, we can begin to envision a decolonized, sustainable, and inspired future -- *and this work isn't as slow as it sounds*. The lead author arrived in the field of sustainability science as an artist who creates sculptural spaces for respectful, safe dialogue, in which she has witnessed groups of former strangers become ready to

creatively address the challenges and opportunities in their neighborhoods after only a couple of hours.

The lead author is personally connected to this work as a product of childhood trauma and modernest isolation: to work toward healing societal divides and building trust, she has reached out and connected with other human beings in her neighborhood of Skid Row, Los Angeles. In the pages below, the authors will describe efforts to gain understanding and build connections between residents with resources and those who are experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. Concurrently, a qualitative study commenced of the experience of being a volunteer leading a collective with individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness, and a series of interviews with individuals who lead homeless service volunteer programs in Skid Row. Through observation, interviews and a review of relevant academic literature, the authors investigated: the causes and effects of loneliness, the tools that people use to build connection, and how people connect across differences in harsh urban conditions. The need to connect is universal – this work was transformative for both the researcher and her neighbors, as they each felt the relief of being heard and appreciated in an environment of playful and imaginative co-creation. This paper includes a description of the rationale for the study as well as the applied qualitative methodology, followed by analysis and a critical discussion of the findings. The study closes with suggestions for applied Sustainability researchers and practitioners who are working to build bridges across socioeconomic divides in urban settings.

Rationale

In this paper, we assume a key to reducing unsustainable consumption and inequity in developed societies is to increase social connection across divides of

culture, status and wealth. This assumption draws on both academic (Wuthnow, 1995; Ahuvia, 2002; Huang & Rust, 2011; Middlemiss & Ebc., 2018) and experiential findings. Facilitating talking circles with diverse groups in three major U.S. cities over five years revealed that many people are hungry for interpersonal connection, and some were not aware of their need until they joined the circle. Thus, this project seeks to build greater understanding of what makes human relationships authentic and enduring. What are the conversational conditions that must be present for people to share openly? How do people maintain relationships in these demanding modern times? And finally, what kinds of interactions can mend divides related to race and class in order to increase equity and social justice?

What the lead author found in her personal life to be a dearth of consistent, authentic connection with a supportive community she found reflected in a subset of modern settler-descendant and consumerist society in the US (Putnam, 2000; Haidt, 2006, Slater, 1990). Structurally-enforced disconnection has allowed gross inequity, intolerance and environmental abuse to compound over the last generation (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977, Whyte, 2013 & 2017; Reo & Parker, 2013; Maldonado et al., 2013). Thus, personal needs for healing and development meet external concerns for the earth and other species: the authors are compelled to support a shift toward balanced individualism and collectivism with effective, loving communication.

This study is a means to learn about connection through both people's stories and lived experience of conducting the research itself. As a resident of a loft in downtown Los Angeles, the lead author found her self conflicted by her own modernist isolation and the overwhelming desperation of those living on the streets of her neighborhood.

Nearly 58,000 people are in need of housing in Los Angeles today, and downtown's Skid Row has become a public health catastrophe (LAHSA, 2019). In a divided reality that contrasts with the latest wave of modern gentrification downtown, a strongly interconnected community lives among tents, unsafe conditions, untreated illnesses, neglected infrastructure and other signs of a broken system. The mayor and members of the City Council are committed to supporting the community with resources, yet, they are unsure how to proceed in this very complex situation (Garcetti, 2015; Narayan, 2018).

This study analyzes and attempts to bridge the divide between people with resources and those experiencing housing insecurity in Skid Row, while investigating the phenomena of isolation and connection on both sides of this imaginary chasm.

Methodology

The structure of this qualitative investigation was informed by grounded theory methodologies (Charmaz 2014, Dey, 1999, Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Strauss and Corbin, 1998, Strauss 1987) that seek to gain understanding of social life through immersive observation and informed analysis, which leads to emergent theories. Grounded theory welcomes a multitude of sources of information as data, and each builds on the emerging concepts through an iterative analytic process of "constant comparison" (Corbin and Strauss, 2015)

The lead author began by introducing herself as an artist, Sustainability scholar and community practitioner, to neighbors who have experienced chronic homelessness but are now living in permanent supportive housing. A weekly group workshop was formed, using talking circles and arts-based activities to build relationships and shared visions for the future of their neighborhood (further discussion of this project can be found in Falstad and Cloutier, (In Review)). The

lead author documented her experiences leading these workshops as a volunteer and participant for one year, and supplemented her exploration with interviews and literature reviews.

After each weekly group workshop, the lead author wrote field notes focused on the verbal and subtle interactions between each participant (including herself), her inner dialogue and impressions, and any revelations (informed by Corbin and Strauss, 2015). These notes sought to embody the ethnographic principles of reflexivity, representational adequacy and authenticity (Denzin, 2014).

To deepen her understanding of the context within which these weekly group workshops were held, the lead author attended a wide range of convenings on the topic of homelessness and the housing crisis in Los Angeles. These included Homelessness and Housing Committee meetings at Los Angeles City Hall, a conference and task force meetings on homelessness with the Los Angeles chapter of the American Institute of Architects, face-to-face meetings with legislators and other staff members of Los Angeles City Councilmembers' offices, special interest meetings with diverse members of the Los Angeles Athletic Club and a public hearing conducted by U.S. Senator Maxine Waters for the State of California. She also participated in grassroots advocacy and activist efforts for homeless rights, housing and sanitation projects.

These efforts were supplemented by a series of qualitative interviews with employees of nonprofit homeless service providers in downtown Los Angeles. To prepare for these interviews, an interview guide was created that gained approval by the IRB while preserving the flexibility needed to respond to an emergent process (Seidman, 2006; Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Kvale, 2007). Questions sought to assess the dynamic between volunteers and program participants to determine the types of interactions and experiences that result in deeper relationship formation and long-

term volunteer commitment. Lessons learned through these interviews could be used to potentially improve volunteer development efforts, reduce risk of harm in volunteer-participant interactions, build bridges between two seemingly divided socioeconomic groups and increase the number of residents who choose to donate their time and energy to the homelessness crisis in their community.

The interview guide was used to conduct five qualitative interviews based on Kvale's (2007) postmodern approach to knowledge co-construction. Kvale prioritizes the interaction aspect of the interview and allows the researcher to adapt to what is being said. The experience should feel conversational and humanistic to the person being interviewed. Sample questions include: How does it look when volunteers and community members you're serving start to connect?; and, What has to happen for a volunteer to commit to deeper involvement in the community? The lead author then transcribed each interview and prepared them for coding and analysis.

Coding

Coding began with line-by-line open and in-vivo coding of all weekly group workshop field notes (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). This process ensures that the researcher does not skip over any crucial details or make assumptions about what is happening: he or she must be open-minded and present with the data to capture its essence. In-vivo codes use words that uniquely capture what was said or observed in order to trigger a holistic memory for the researcher. Examples of in-vivo codes generated during this phase include: everything starts with respect; what about couples?; not like slaves; why are movies all white people?; and had a little drink.

Every code was transcribed into a spreadsheet and arranged according to similarities, which were eventually refined into categories that described what was happening in those instances. The major categories which emerged –Talking about

connection, Talk about being alone, Practicing connection and disconnection, Evidence of connection and disconnection, Leveraging the project, Self-reflexive and Space/setting/people observations – formed the basis of a code book based on the methods of Corbin and Strauss (2015). The book organizes deep analysis of the data as the categories are defined, properties of each category are delineated, and the dimensions of each property are laid out. A sample of my initial code book (Figure 2.1) follows.

	A	B	C	D	E
6	**Concepts**	**Properties**	**Dimensions**	**Codes/Location**	**Notes/Sources**
7	**Talking About Connection**				
8	(and disconnection - used to build	Ways to Connect	From extending to showing		
9	connection, could also be used to reinforce		restraint	1-3-11 being fair and just	
10	boundaries)			1-35-13 wanting to be respected	
11				1-35-14 they can help each other	
12				1-35-15 encouraging healthy disagreement	
13				1-35-16 everyone is equally important	
14				1-43-16 he wants to speak his truth	

Figure 2.1. Sample of Initial Code Book

Once the code book was established, a review of literature on the phenomenon of loneliness allowed the application of concepts and theories during the next stages of analysis. Moustakas (1961) described two concepts of loneliness to look for in the data: the existential loneliness shared by every human and which produces creative inspiration; and loneliness anxiety – the pervasive modern condition that has led to alienation, conformity and distrust. Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) provided a long list of actions and interactions that, if identified in my data, would indicate that connection was growing between people.

Informed by this review, the lead author then conducted an axial analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Glaser, 1978, Strauss and Corbin, 1998, Charmaz 2014) to come up with a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between the categories, properties and dimensions of the data. She created diagrams of these analyses informed by Charmaz (2014), who believes that "axial coding helps to clarify and to extend the analytic power of your emerging ideas." (p 63). The

emerging concepts, "ritual distributes effort and power" and "connection is a fluid state" came out of this diagrammatic process, exemplified below (Figure 2.2)

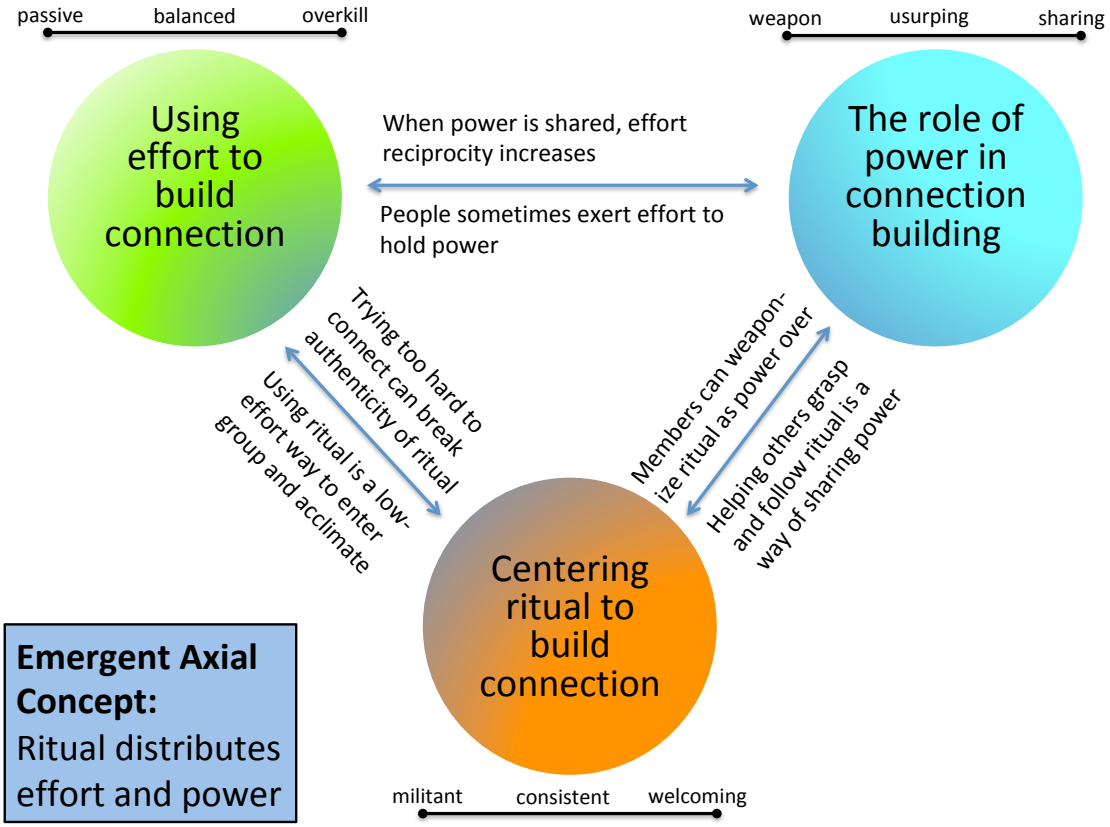


Figure 2.2. Example of Axial Analysis Diagram

At this point, another review of literature supported and refined the concepts that were emerging in the data. The lead author's social experience with individuals who participate in Jewish culture helped her to understand that the strong inter-connectedness experienced in the Jewish community at large could serve as a parallel model for analysis. An example of this interconnectedness is found in the shtetl – a phenomenon that began in Eastern Europe as a loosely defined village predicated on shared social values and traditions and has evolved into a means through which members of the modern Jewish community identify each other (Katz & Ebrary, 2007).

Similarly, a strong theme that practiced social values are central to building connection prompted the lead author to code the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament (Torah) to derive a categorical list of 14 behavioral edicts to search for in the transcriptions (such as communion, compassion, generosity, honesty, reciprocity, right relation and solidarity, etc.).

Simultaneous coding of the five interview transcripts followed, applying Values, Verbal Interaction, and Focused coding. The lists of values that emerged through literature review were combined and the transcriptions were analyzed for evidence of these. The culturally sensitive writings of Gee (2012) and Goleman (1995) helped to better identify the lenses and biases that the authors bring to the process in order to more clearly grasp the personalized meanings of the interviewees' words. While Verbal Interaction coding has been used to improve people's listening skills (Gilligan and Josselson, 2015), this method was chosen for its emphasis on self-reflexivity: the process seeks to build understanding through context by considering the cultural setting and the researcher's relationship to the study in addition to what is being said (Saldana, 2016). The lead author used interpersonal connection-building tactics that she observed in the first phase to guide the Verbal Interaction coding process. Finally, the prevalent themes found in the data to-date informed the Focused Coding (Charmaz, 2014, Saldana, 2016, Hoonaard, 1997, Dey, 1999) element of this stage of analysis. As Hoonaard (1997) intimates, these themes have sensitized the researcher so that they can be refined through analysis.

This stage of analysis resulted in minor revisions and expansion of the original code book, and the creation of a new code book specifically for the

Values Coding process. As shown in the sample below, most of the value categories were widely represented in the data (Figure 2.3.)

	A	B	C
1		**Coding Interviews for Personal and Inter-personal Values**	
2	**Values**	**Locations**	**Lessons**
9	responsiveness	2-2-39, 2-6-5, 3-1-22, 3-2-23, 3-2-33, 3-3-24, 3-4-11, 3-4-27, 3-5-24, 3-5-31, 3-6-2, 3-6-28, 3-6-31, 3-7-5, 3-7-12, 3-7-22, 3-7-41, 3-8-24, 3-9-23, 3-11-19, 4-1-36, 4-2-39, 4-3-21, 4-3-25, 4-3-46, 4-4-6, 4-4-15, 4-4-29, 4-4-40, 4-5-16, 4-6-16, 4-7-21, 4-7-27, 4-8-18, 4-8-27, 4-9-2, 4-9-11, 4-9-39, 4-9-42, 5-1-37, 5-2-7, 5-2-10, 5-2-22, 5-3-6, 5-3-15, 5-3-36, 5-4-18,	In interactions and reactions, when volunteers are listening and responding to participants' needs, and when nonprofit staff are responding to what they're watching between volunteers and participants, and clients/participants' needs
10	**right relation**: accountability, kindness, loyalty, openness	2-2-22, 2-2-27, 2-2-41, 2-3-1, 2-3-15, 2-4-38, 2-5-15, 2-5-28, 3-3-41, 3-4-4, 3-4-7, 3-4-12, 3-4-27, 3-4-35, 3-4-46, 3-5-6, 3-5-32, 3-6-2, 3-6-20, 3-6-25, 3-6-31, 3-6-37, 3-7-9, 3-7-22, 3-7-29, 3-7-41, 3-8-20, 3-8-22, 3-8-43, 3-9-13, 3-9-23, 3-9-30, 3-9-38, 3-10-4, 3-10-17, 3-10- 3-10-35, 3-10-43, 3-11-8, 3-11-13, 3-11-26, 4-2-32, 4-2-40, 4-3-1, 4-3-11, 4-3-21, 4-3-45, 4-4-10, 4-4-24, 4-4-29, 4-4-40, 4-5-16, 4-6-16, 4-6-22, 4-6-31, 4-7-2, 4-7-18, 4-7-22, 4-7-30, 4-7-38, 4-8-18, 4-8-27, 4-9-13, 4-9-39, 4-9-42, 5-1-45, 5-2-34, 5-2-43, 5-3-6, 5-3-13, 5-3-33, 5-3-46, 5-4-2, 5-4-8, 5-4-13, 5-4-35, 5-4-38, 5-5-11, 5-5-15	This category is crucial to successful connection building between any two people, whether volunteer-participant, staff-volunteer, staff-participant, etc. Proved to be the most commonly appearing in the data.
11	solidarity	2-3-13, 2-6-5, 3-1-30, 3-2-46, 3-3-11, 3-4-15, 3-4-43, 3-5-7, 3-5-32, 3-6-5, 3-6-30, 3-6-35, 3-7-16, 3-7-31, 3-7-35, 3-7-43, 3-8-30, 3-8-43, 3-9-3, 3-9-23, 3-9-29, 3-9-46, 3-10-4, 3-10-22, 3-10-32, 3-10-43, 4-2-46, 4-3-2, 4-3-45, 4-4-16, 4-5-21, 4-6-20, 4-7-31, 4-9-8, 5-1-45, 5-2-3, 5-3-24, 5-3-26, 5-4-5,	Shows up when staff step in to protect the safety and boundaries of participants, and when volunteers speak up in the world about the systemic issues and realities surrounding homelessness in the outside world and/or bring other people in

Figure 2.3. Sample of Values Coding Chart

In the final stages of analysis, the axial diagrammatic process was repeated, now informed by several more layers of data collection, literature review and consideration. The final emergent concepts at this preliminary stage – ritual as fast forward, sustainability is values-centricity, and effort-connection feedback – were derived through the exercise of creating the diagram in Figure 2.4.

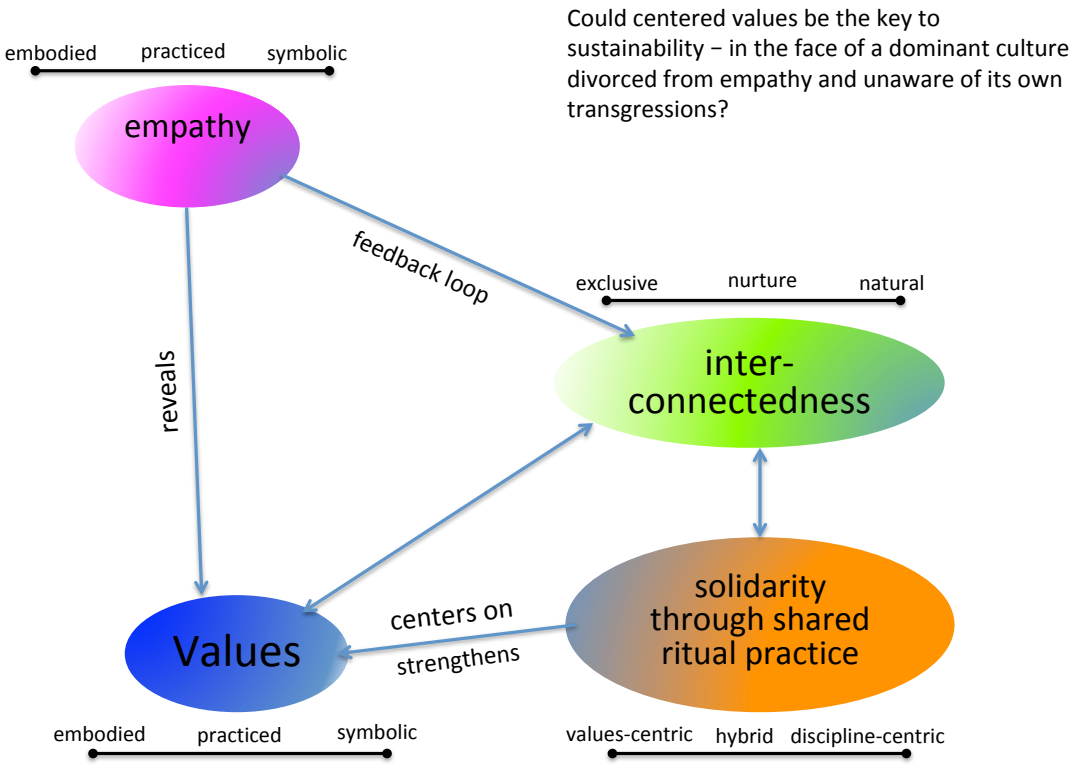


Figure 2.4. Final Axial Analysis Diagram

Analysis

Group Process

Many lessons, patterns and dynamics came to light in the course of twelve months of weekly group talking circles and arts-based workshops. Incorporating the practice of "Council" as developed by the Center for Council (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009; Hoeberichts, 2012; Loos & Clements, 1997) centered the experience on

building connection through storytelling and shared intentions to listen and speak from the heart, be spontaneous and use brevity. Council provided structure as a series of rituals: it was common ground for the group and means for new members to acclimate. Group members used their grasp of the rituals to demonstrate power, to extend toward new additions, and as conversational short cuts. Council allowed our group, which was comprised of the lead author (facilitator) and residents who already knew each other to varying degrees, to enter trust-building by discussing connection and disconnection, ways to connect and stories about connection, among many other topics. In these foundational areas, we used our opinions, experiences, hopes and fears to subtly establish and reinforce boundaries, show pride and wisdom and seek sympathy or compassion from the group.

These phenomena continued, expanded and grew more complex as the group progressed. Our talking circles focused on sharing, from small talk to deep sharing (connection-building), from protective or aggressive brevity to talking too much (distancing). The group shared about memories, stories, mundane details, personal details, emotions, uncertainties, triumphs, failures, generosity, and family. Effort of connection-building was evident in the sharing of personal information – when sharing too much (over-trying) led to disconnection, while refraining on purpose or sharing "just enough" mended rifts. Similarly, finding common ground was found to be beneficial while over-equating created distance. Members shared opinions, sometimes negative, as a way to show enthusiasm for a contrasting idea. Mistakes, hopes, desires, fears, knowledge and positivity were shared with the intention of building connection, though there was evidence that some stories of spirituality, gratitude, triumphs, perseverance and self-care may have skewed positive for the sake of etiquette. This was reinforced during talk about being alone, which was

mostly used to show strength and positivity, while members rarely showed vulnerability around this topic or admitted to having a hard time being alone.

The group practiced connection and disconnection by "being a group together," managing power, effort, boundaries and uncertainty. At least half of each weekly workshop was devoted to arts-based and collaborative methods dedicated to the development of a shared vision for transitional supportive housing in Skid Row. The complexity of this process grew in parallel to the group's establishment of trust and familiarity. Both the facilitator and the resident group members expressed their levels of commitment through the amount of effort they devoted toward the activities: from "going the distance" (connection-building) to trying too hard or not really trying (distancing). This was also seen when members contributed items and supplies to the group or did unexpected things for others, whether to keep momentum or to overextend for the sake of acceptance or martyrdom.

Shared decision-making remains central to the applied purpose of the group. Our ability to compromise and make decisions together increased as we got to know each other, the lead author became more comfortable as facilitator, group members became accustomed to the process, and the project grew more complicated. While the authors' central intention is to share power, members were also seen to usurp it, defend it, and use it as a weapon: sometimes having power in the group meant being the one who paid for it, or not just accepting handouts. This played out when members offered direction to each other, gently, subversively or aggressively; we chose to be real or cover up; and in the case of making space for each other or taking it for our selves.

Showing up, consistency and following through proved to be major connection-builders and quick distance-creators, and trust grew in the group when members made an effort to share intentions, set expectations or be transparent.

However, the most important skill in building connection throughout this process has been "going with the flow." Imperfection, challenges, mistakes, disruptions, schedule conflicts, inconsistency, mood swings and bureaucracy made strict agendas, time tables and control nearly impossible. The group's growing familiarity with Council helped us maintain our dedication in spite of the ebbs and flows, as the format centers going with the flow: the lead author has found as a Council facilitator, that "the circle does what it needs to do."

Other means of building connection or creating distance that were practiced throughout the project include: using humor (cracking jokes, poking fun, making yourself a joke), sharing laughs, using tact (clarifying as pushback, differentiating, antagonizing, passive-aggression), making physical contact, asking questions, kindness, reassuring/encouraging, using creativity, and seeking affirmation. The effects of these tactics ranged from subtle, unspoken indication of shared understandings, to focused attention, changes in cadence, and expressions of affirmation, acceptance, gratitude and sincerity. The behaviors the lead author witnessed are consistent with those found in psychology, communication and linguistics literature (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, Greenwald, 1980, Becvar, 1974, Bormaster & Treat, 1982, Gumperz, 1982). While some apprehension, defensiveness and judgment appeared; it mostly indicated self-protection and trepidation from those who wanted to connect. The most overwhelming aspect of the experience was the palpable enthusiasm that pervaded each session and served as a guide for the direction of our activities. Each of us spread our enthusiasm outside of the group and brought in friends, new resident members and professionals to support the work.

Interview Coding

To supplement the weekly group observations, interviews were held with five individuals who are employed at four major nonprofit homeless service providers in Skid Row Los Angeles. Each interviewee has had extensive experience working closely with volunteers and participants and has unique insight into the relationships that develop between these two groups. The interviews were meant to elucidate the reasons why individuals choose to volunteer, why they stay involved (or don't), what it looks like when they start to connect with participants, what works (and doesn't) to build connection, what are some of the conflicts that arise, and what kinds of outcomes happen as a result of these connections. While the authors acknowledge the contributions of hundreds of individuals toward the provision of services that support the wellbeing and safety of the un-housed in Los Angeles, they chose to dive deeply with a smaller and more geographically specific group.

Beginning with the dynamics of connection building, the transcripts were coded for personal and inter-personal values. The values appeared in both the interactions described by the interviewees as well as the exchanges between the lead author and the interviewees as they sought to build connection themselves. The most prevalent category that appeared in the data is "right relation:" an inter-personal value set that encompasses accountability, kindness, loyalty and openness. This was followed closely by responsiveness, generosity, and compassion. These traits are inherent in the act of volunteering, and they predominate the interviewees' actions, words and interpretations. Humility appeared many times in the texts, as volunteers and staff members set aside their personal feelings and reactions knowing that participants have experienced unimaginable traumas, and that complex challenges like mental illness, addiction and physical disabilities make it harder for them to connect.

The values of solidarity and fairness show up when staff members step in to protect the safety and boundaries of participants, and when volunteers speak up in the outside world about systemic issues and realities surrounding homelessness. Staff members that work hard to protect their clients and volunteers demonstrated discipline; righteousness appeared when volunteers and staff "do the right thing," show up, follow through and provide support; and substance is demonstrated when volunteers and staff try to understand participants' points of view, when people choose social service positions over more lucrative fields, and when retirees choose to dedicate their time in service.

Temperance, including discernment, self-control and balance, is a value set whose importance was not revealed by the number of times it appeared in the data, but by the power the incidences held toward understanding these relationships. The phenomenon comes up in boundary negotiations and communication guidance that is crucial to maintaining the trust and safety of participants and volunteers. Other values that were more implicitly important than their prevalence would indicate include communion, honesty, empathy and reciprocity.

The idea of "within-without" (the extent to which members of the group recognize and support other members (within) and/or people outside the group (without)) appeared when volunteers begin looking at the differences between their own social networks and access and those of the participants, and when participants open up more to volunteers compared to staff members. "Service-oriented" (putting values to action in solidarity with others within/without) shows up when people decide to volunteer for the first time, deepen their responsibilities, expand their work with a nonprofit or begin additional efforts. The values of "value first" (social values might lead one to denounce group members when they are wrong, or to abstain while maintaining group identity), "ritual first" (leaning on ritual to maintain identity,

differentiate from others, act in solidarity, feel connected) and "inter-connectedness" (housing insecure communities relying on each other socially and economically) were revealed through the group workshop observations but did not appear in the interviews which did not focus on interactions between participants.

Interview Q & A

When asked why people choose to get involved as volunteers in Skid Row, four out of five interviewees replied that they want to be part of the solution. Whether due to proximity, statistics, news stories or personal experience of Skid Row, people feel compelled to figure out how they can help. Someone might hear a person's story and relate to an aspect of the experience, while others volunteer for less altruistic reasons, such as frustration or annoyance with the situation, or the desire to build their resume. Finally, some individuals volunteer for the first time with a group of co-workers or members of an association they are involved with. According to the interviewees, people choose to volunteer with organizations whose opportunities match their skill sets, who have excellent reputations, and whose services they deem to be effective.

Every interviewee agreed that volunteers who stay involved have gotten to know the participants, and four out of five indicate that they must have learned more about homelessness. Realizing that homelessness can happen to anyone is a crucial motivating factor, as is beginning to understand the systemic differences between volunteers' situations and the participants'. Volunteers tend to stay involved when they interact on a weekly basis, when the organization is supportive and shows their appreciation, and when they feel they are making a difference and that the work is effective. Role reversals, when participants take the role of educator and supporter, are also experiences that move volunteers to commit long-term.

Volunteers that do not stay involved tend to be those that participate in superficial events with limited participant interaction. Some over-commit their time between competing interests and others underestimate how emotionally and physically draining the work can be. Finally, some volunteers leave because they were not actually committed to the work; they were just trying to build their resumes.

The interviewees shared many effective actions that volunteers and organizations can make to help build connection with participants. Volunteers are advised to keep showing up and to be consistent, to remember people's names, and to show an interest by talking, listening, smiling and making eye contact. By listening, volunteers can break down stereotypes that they may be holding – they should express gratitude for any part of the story that a participant wants to share, treat people as more than just their situation or illness, and allow people power and a place at the table. Making decisions together and allowing participants the chance to give back are powerful connection-building experiences that volunteers can initiate. These gestures do not have to be grandiose, however, small efforts can make a big difference in the lives of participants who have been treated as if they don't matter.

Organizations can support volunteers in their relationship building by encouraging them to progress toward roles with more involvement, and following up with them continuously. They can better prepare volunteers for their experience by managing expectations and exploring their hopes and fears. Requesting a minimum commitment duration is sometimes helpful, and organization staff can guide volunteers to use the language of empowerment and inclusion.

Some of the factors that impede connection building are due to the vulnerable nature of individuals who are experiencing housing insecurity. The participants

might object to what is being offered, or resist the volunteer due to age or other attributes. Confrontations might make the volunteer feel unwelcome, or participants will take advantage of a new volunteer because of their survivor mentality. Volunteers might sabotage their own interests to connect by being even slightly inconsistent, whether in scheduling, bending the rules or making exceptions. They also may ask too many questions when the participant is not ready to open up.

When volunteers begin to develop relationships with participants, they will tend to return to the same location or group, begin to remember names, and hang around after the session has ended just for conversation. The interviewees report a lot of smiling, happiness, communication and engagement – people feel more comfortable, they're making jokes and chatting. Volunteers may stop taking things personally when a participant is having a bad day. Participants might rave about the event or service, while not specifically referring to the volunteer who initiated it. Similarly, even when it may seem that a participant is not opening up, they often miss the volunteer if he or she is absent. In time, the experience feels less like a volunteer opportunity and more like a chance to visit people that you care about.

Successful relationships with volunteers might lead participants to feel more comfortable making decisions, asking for help, taking advice, or becoming creative. They may seem more confident, and open to begin using available supportive services. Volunteers may begin to interact more with the agency, taking on extra shifts or more involved roles, or seeking leadership opportunities. They may begin talking about their experience in the outside world and educating others – they start paying attention more to people on the streets and wishing more people would understand. Engaged volunteers sometimes suggest new ideas to the agency or transform their efforts into whole programs. Some get their friends, co-workers and family members involved and others become donors: they appreciate that the work

is being done the right way and trust that the agency will use their money effectively. One interviewee shared that some volunteers are so moved by their experience that they transition out of the corporate sector for work in social service or education.

The organizational staff interviewees urge the readers to remember that we are living in a time without a lot of safety nets – that homelessness can happen to any of us. One of the most important things we can do is to remove judgment and stigma, and counter popular myths (including that substance abuse causes homelessness, when it's usually the opposite – people use substances to cope with being homeless). We should remember that every person is someone's brother, daughter or best friend, and that each of us is a product of his or her environment. Four out of five interviewees stressed the importance of boundaries in order to protect vulnerable participants – volunteers shouldn't share too much personal information, they shouldn't have relationships with participants outside the organization, and they should follow the participants' lead on what they're comfortable speaking about. They also remind us that vulnerable people can interpret connection differently, and that gaining someone else's perspective is a two-way street.

The interviewees also shared advice for new or growing organizations: be consistent, don't grow too fast; center relationship-building in your volunteer department; try to anticipate as many situations as possible to develop policies and protocols; and think about who you want to be to your volunteers – what are you really trying to get from them and what kind of environment do you need to create to be able to foster that? Staff should pay close attention to participants' moods and behavior to mitigate interactions with volunteers when needed. New organizations should build a volunteer curriculum and handbook, enforce guidelines, keep a

volunteer schedule, hold appreciation events, and make volunteers feel like they're part of the organization. Having a set structure ensures quality control and alleviates volunteers from having to constantly think of new ideas. Organizations are also urged to seek client and volunteer input for new programs and curricula to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper described lessons learned about interpersonal connection across socioeconomic differences (also described as identity and status bridging social capital, see Wuthnow, 2002) during a participatory, community-based sustainability project in an urban setting. Sustainability scholars can apply the insight gained through qualitative analysis to encourage stronger social networks and the potential adoption of long-term sustainability.

The study is limited to an intimate group of residents from one facility: while the small sample size does not prove larger trends, it is required for the type of in-depth collaboration and interpersonal connection building intended by the authors. Working as a researcher who is new to academia after a career as a fine artist, there is the chance that the lead author may have needlessly re-invented processes or overlooked insight from previous investigations. However, this naiveté allowed for unhindered experimentation, creative optimism and ultimate flexibility in research design.

Informed by the lessons from weekly dialogues and five interviews, the lead author is supporting this project as it grows into its own nonprofit. Her challenge is to prioritize human connection throughout the entire structure of the organization. She will continue to use Council with participants, staff and volunteers, she will follow the interviewees' advice in creating volunteer training and communication

guidelines, and she will protect the transparent and collaborative process that has developed naturally throughout the project. The housing communities we establish will be designed around a set of community agreements in order to encourage connection, and the group will act as ambassadors of our approach to other groups seeking similar results.

This project has reinforced the difference between connection and authentic friendship. While the egalitarian structure of the talking circle and a focus on interpersonal connection building leads the first author to develop bonds and trust with program participants – she must acknowledge the influence of power and the realities of socioeconomic striations in our culture. The facilitator (with a bucolic suburban childhood, twenty years of mostly continuous employment, ample credit and two advanced degrees) and the participants (who have collectively experienced multiple decades of chronic homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse and mental illness) can never fully understand each other, speak each other's dialects or feel true belonging in each other's worlds. Regardless of how close our friendships become, the lead author will remain an "outsider" in a group united by shared stories of struggle and resilience. We did, however, find the common ground between us and create an atmosphere of joy, inspiration and comfort.

The lead author confronted this reality by intentionally introducing topics of equity, social justice and inclusion into group conversations when safe and appropriate. The differences in perspective proved to be helpful in gaining understanding of history, oppression, and internalized racism. Where group members may have felt uncomfortable discussing these issues with other outsiders in the past, our conversations seemed to have helped shed light on the structural forces impacting their situations.

Another strong theme in this research is the tenuousness of connection. The lead author observed her tendency to over-spend on the project, exhaust herself and show up in spite of her best interests in order to keep people excited. She is working against the tide of disappointments brought on by a league of past volunteers who began projects only to abandon them. Even after one year of commitment and extended efforts, it remains clear that the group would fall apart after just a few weeks of the lead author's absence. This reinforces the importance of commitment, showing up, and following through as an imbedded researcher and suggests that further work can be done to strengthen members' collective determination independent of the researcher.

Finally, the roles we choose to play and the authority we distribute stand in the way of pure connection: relating openly with our guards down, accepting wholly without judgment, being our selves completely. These structures are at once futile and temporarily useful – they are convenient and familiar, they provide comfort when one seeks guidance, and they provide resources when leveraged. The research highlights a balancing act between upholding the example set through cultivated professionalism and maturity while allowing imperfection and weakness to build connection through shared human experience.

This study contributes to Sustainability scholars' understanding of building connection through community-based research, while presenting opportunities for further investigation. Studies have shown the sense of belonging is positively associated with longevity (Holt-Lunstad et al, 2010; Nedelcu, 2018) and mental health (Larocco & House, 1980), and that this feeling can be promoted through volunteerism (Boyte et al, 1998; Wilson, 2000; Wuthnow, 1991) and environmental stewardship (Yagatich et al, 2018; Lyth et al, 2017; Fisher et al, 2015). Future research might approach the issue from the opposite direction to examine whether

those who feel connected to their communities might be more prone toward environmental stewardship and reduced consumption of energy and resources. This could also contribute further understanding of the distinctions between collectivistic and invidualistic motivations for volunteerism (Eckstein, 2001).

Insight on the subtleties of connection building and the evidence of trust is helpful for Sustainability researchers who seek to empower communities toward collective shifts. By centering respect, authenticity and kindness, facilitators can prompt groups to value their own perspectives, contextualize their experiences, ignite their imaginations, and mobilize their talents and skills toward the co-creation of a more sustainable future.

CHAPTER 4

THE BUILDING COMMUNITY: USING PARTICIPATORY DESIGN IN SKID ROW TO BUILD CONNECTION AND A SHARED VISION FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Abstract

This paper will present a hyper-local response to the homelessness crisis in downtown Los Angeles. The drastic need for housing and support presents an opportunity for alternative, sustainable models that are affordable, inspirational and quick to mobilize. In this ongoing project, individuals who have experienced homelessness have formed "The Building Community" to co-envision a tiny home ecovillage of transitional supportive housing for their neighbors who are still living on the streets. The lead author is an artist and applied researcher who developed "The Building Community" (TBC) method using participatory design to build trust and connection across differences while co-creating sustainable futures. TBC incorporates the Council method of communication and a progression of creative participatory workshops to co-develop practical skill sets in relationship-building, collective design, permaculture, and sustainable construction. The Flourishing Scale was used to measure participants' sense of purpose and wellbeing during and after the reported period, and this data was supplemented with qualitative analysis of field notes, visual documentation, secondary sources, interviews and literature. Results indicate that collaborative creative activities, ritual, consistency and commitment can help to build trust, and that a combination of measures may be necessary to capture change in flourishing in a group experiencing complex physical, mental and social challenges. In this unique and intimate pilot sample, both the facilitator and participants found hopefulness and purpose through the trusting relationships they developed.

Introduction

Nearly 58,000 people are in need of housing in Los Angeles today, and downtown's Skid Row has become a public health catastrophe (LAHSA, 2019). In a divided reality that contrasts with the latest wave of modern gentrification downtown, a strongly interconnected community lives among tents, unsafe conditions, untreated illnesses, neglected infrastructure and other signs of a broken system. The mayor's office and the LA County Board of Supervisors each secured funding in 2016 to provide housing and supportive services, but many are frustrated by the slow pace of project approvals, high costs and lack of visible results (McGahan, 2019; Woodyard, 2019; Smith, 2019). City officials are calling on the governor to declare a state of emergency (Gage, 2019), and President Trump has vowed to take action (Dillon, 2019).

Downtown Los Angeles is a complex environment divided socially by class, culture, age and race. The concentrated presence of thousands of individuals experiencing homelessness, who are often also suffering with addiction, mental illness, disabilities and other challenges, create pervasive stress (Stewart, 2016). Developers of the many new luxury apartment buildings advocate against the needs and desires of the Skid Row community, in favor of forced removal and criminalization (Garnand & Herring, 2019; Vitale, 2010; Harcourt, 2005). Correspondingly, the homeless encampments are becoming more densely populated and are increasingly targeted with violence (Green, 2019). High rates of mental illness, crime and unsanitary conditions make many apartment dwellers and business owners in the neighborhood uncomfortable -- causing conflict between those with

differing views of land ownership, societal norms and stigmas (Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Powe, 2010; Davis, 2006).

Disconnection and loneliness have reached epidemic levels in the U.S. as a whole, attributed in part to traumatic and divisive life experiences like those playing out on Skid Row; but it is also linked to the alienating effects of western individualism and its emphasis on consumption (Hari, 2018; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Slater, 1990). The vestiges of trauma can prevent people from connecting with others and effectively pursuing their goals (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017) – conditions that are crucial for community organizing (Arnstein, 1969). If we are to counteract hegemonic forces and work together toward a more equitable society, we must attend to personal and collective healing. Facilitated dialogue across the perceived divides in Skid Row can heal distrust and misunderstanding and slowly build rapport, until pockets of collective progress become achievable.

Effective collaborative action requires the clarity of mind to hold authentic relationships across differences, to see ourselves as part of an interconnected whole, and to better understand the human condition (Toyama, 2015; Shiva, 2005; Zolli & Healy, 2012; Leach, Scoones & Stirling, 2010; Cajete, 2000; Berkes, 2008; WCED, 1987). Participatory researchers can use dialogue-based practices to invite changes in consciousness for both the privileged and the oppressed, so that we can become more aware of our own attitudes, the causes of inequity, and the effects of our actions on others and the earth (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008). The Council method of communication (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009) uses a circle format to induce a feeling of connection that soothes isolation and fear, in order to reach beyond internalized differences toward collective awareness and empathy (See Methods section for further information on use of Council in academic study). In council, people can share what life is like for them in a safe space with others who listen from the heart.

Further, arts-based research can channel some of the challenging energy and emotions from dialogue into representative objects or forms, presenting a safe way to address power relations (Sholette et al 2018, Kindle location 4077), come to see social need, assumptions and privilege (Kindle location 4600), and collectively heal from the traumas of violence, inequity, and marginalization (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017).

Three decades after *Our Common Future* called for urgent action on climate change (WCED, 1987), we have seen unsuccessful attempts at global collaboration as we sailed past three out of nine planetary boundaries (limits like climate change and ozone depletion within which humans can survive) (Zolli & Healy, 2012). We are unable to predict how the earth and human society will respond as these thresholds are breached, so we need a toolkit that will allow us to continue living purposeful lives through various means. This requires a shift from our current social system's avoidance and escape from reality (Slater, 1990): we are currently contained in uniform, pragmatic dwellings, alienated from the sources of the products we consume, and disconnected from the effects of our actions on other people, the Earth, and our selves. Among a list of recommended actions, resiliency theorists Zolli and Healy (2012) argue for increased connection and collaboration across siloes that avoids dependency, and strengthened autonomy through the decentralization of functions and responsibilities. Hyper-local demonstrations of collective, sustainable community building in Skid Row represent one possible step forward.

The authors will demonstrate how collaborative sustainable practices can build connection and increase wellbeing in an urban setting. The next section describes the development of the TBC method and the process of implementing a pilot project. Next, results of the pilot are discussed, with emphasis on its site-specificity as a

necessity for replication. Finally, the authors will describe ongoing efforts, challenges and implications for future work.

Methods

Below, the authors will share their rationale for choosing the methodologies used in the implementation of The Building Community, followed by a description of the setting, background and composition of the group. Next, the specific methods will be described: Council talking circles, a curriculum of collaborative creative activities, and the application of qualitative analysis and the Flourishing Scale.

Methodology

This paper describes a collaborative project guided by the TBC method, which combines benefits from Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Design Research methodologies. Akin to the practice of PAR, the authors approached the future participants of this project as co-learners rather than subjects, whose experiences of chronic homelessness are essential to the development of viable solutions to the crisis (Elden & Levin, 1991; Stringer, 2014; Jordan, 2008). Both the lead author and every project participant reside in the neighborhood that the group examined together, where they feel a sense of belonging, a responsibility for its future, and concern for the wellbeing of its people (Tandon, 2011): this is essential to the potential success of TBC. The process is intended to be transformative: they co-designed methods, tested and iterated solutions with the shared intention to redistribute resources and power toward equity and social justice (Jordan, 2008; White, 1996; Arnstein, 1969). The project bridged the realms of research and academia with community-driven action as it grows into a nonprofit organization that provides job training, housing and education.

The project also draws from the practice of Design in research contexts, which provides freedom for creativity in approaching complex problems (in this case, improving equity, sustainability and happiness) (Edelson, 2009). Known as research through design, co-design, or participatory design, and similar to creative placemaking, the activities use design and the creation of objects to gain understanding of the context of a community, its needs and desires, and the possibilities for its future (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Michel et al., 2007; Rodgers & Yee, 2014; Schupbach and Ball, 2016). The weekly workshops are an iterative process of collective design – as the co-created forms evolve and grow more sophisticated in their embodiment of social knowledge, they generate learning and produce theories. As the interpersonal, political and environmental challenges facing the participants present themselves physically in the forms, they are confronted, discussed and folded into solutions. The facilitator (lead author) also intentionally incorporates dialogue on systemic barriers, racism, privilege, politics and history in the effort to address spatial injustice and the "politics of belonging and dis-belonging" (Bedoya, 2013).

The Building Community

The lead author introduced herself to the residents of a permanent supportive housing building in August 2018 as an artist, scholar and neighbor who is looking to create with others. She showed images of houses hand-built with earthbag, adobe and cob as examples of her aesthetics and shared her desire to see such structures amidst the city center high rises. Several of the residents responded enthusiastically and invited her to begin a weekly group workshop. Within the first few sessions, the group decided to use the name, "The Building Community" (TBC), and to focus their efforts on developing a plan for a tiny home ecovillage of transitional supportive

housing for Skid Row. The goal was a way to give back to the residents' friends who are still living on the streets, to learn a new trade, create inspiring sculptural environments and live more in harmony with the earth's systems. The group decided unanimously to construct a formal research project around their process, with a timeline, curriculum, milestones and evaluation. The members provided formal consent to participate in the research and verbally reinforced their consent in response to reminders throughout the process.

Each of the resident members of The Building Community have experienced long-term homelessness and is living with multiple challenges, such as substance abuse/ addictions, conviction histories, limited formal education, low fixed incomes, chronic illnesses and physical disabilities, among other conditions. While demographics were not formally captured for the purposes of this project, the group is predominately African American, a large majority of members are masculine-identified, and ages range from about thirty to seventy years. The facilitator is Caucasian, female-identified and was 40-41 years of age during this research period. On average, three to five members consistently attend each weekly workshop, while some sessions welcomed up to twelve residents. Additional residents were attracted to join the group by the snowball effect, as news of its purpose, activities, and accolades was spread by dedicated members and word of mouth.

The Building Community workshops take place on Thursdays from 1:30pm until about 3:30pm, in a large communal activity room within the secured confines of a clean and modern permanent supportive housing complex in downtown Los Angeles. Members are free to arrange the furniture in the space to accommodate their activities, including a large wooden table and chairs and several upholstered armchairs; the room also allows for ample floor space when needed. A full kitchen with sink, appliances, cabinets and a locking pantry are also available to the group.

Each session begins with informal check-ins as group members arrive and arrange the furniture as necessary. With only three exceptions due to deadlines and scheduling conflicts (see Discussion section for details), the first halves of the workshops were dedicated to the "Council" format of circle-based storytelling.

Council

Council was chosen to open and maintain the communicative space necessary for transformational PAR: an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, equal power and honesty, that leads to self-reflection, dialogue and consensus (Stringer, 2014; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Argyris & Schön, 1991). Council (as developed by the Center for Council in Los Angeles, CA) has been proven effective in multicultural dialogue, connection-building, trauma therapy, education, mediation and judicial settings (Hoeberichts, 2012; Pranis, 2003; Buie & Wright, 2010; Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009; Brown, 2004; Pranis, Stuart, Wedge, 2003; Loos, 1997; Hoffman, 2004; Hoffman & Anderson, 2003; Boyes-Watson, 2008). In Council: participants sit in a circle, acknowledging that we are all equal; a talking piece is passed to focus attention on the speaker; people listen to what is spoken and what is not; we seek to understand before being understood; and building community takes precedence over the self (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009). By focusing on storytelling with an agreement to speak and listen from the heart, use brevity and be spontaneous, Council avoids the "support group" atmosphere and leads to meaningful trusting relationships between participants.

In this state of collective awareness, diversity and disagreement do not lead as readily to polarization and hostility. Learning to hear the voice of council can help people transcend even the most deeply ensconced cultural, racial, and personal identifications. Feeling part of the circle's wholeness reduces the fear and despair of

isolation, which allows disagreement to become the bridge to greater mutual understanding (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009, p 6).

Council includes elements of ritual that provide structure, safety, familiarity and cohesion for the group (see Results section for more details of these dynamics). The circle is set with meaningful objects in the center (in this case, a hand-crafted blanket from Mexico, a Tibetan singing bowl, battery-powered votive candles, and an array of small "talking pieces" that have sentimental value to the lead author). Setting the circle evokes the beginning of council and a sacred space, which is reinforced by the introduction of "dedications." Members are invited to dedicate the council to any person, event or idea on their minds, and to mark their dedication by lighting a candle or ringing the bell. Once council has been "opened" in this way, the Council facilitator would present a topic for the day. Topics, such as "the fluid nature of time" and "the feeling of home" were chosen based on the progression of the group's dialogue, current events, and suggestions from Council literature.

A "quick round" begins the Council storytelling as a warm-up, intended to be a light-hearted introduction to the topic. The prompt might be "what words come to mind when you think of home?" or "how fast is your day moving?" and members have the choice to respond to it directly, to share something else on their mind, or to take a moment of silence before passing the talking piece. Any member can begin the round, closing his or her comment by passing the talking piece to his or her left or right. A more in-depth round follows, usually prompting members to share a story relating to the topic when something happened, or when it didn't happen, and how it made them feel. Depending on available time and the brevity of participants, the Council session may include a second or third full round, or it may proceed directly to a "witnessing" round. In witnessing, members are invited to share a word, phrase, or theme that they "heard" during Council. Finally, the Council closes,

often with the passing of a fun rhythmic sequence using stomping, clapping, eye contact and/or other act of bodily coordination. Candles are turned off, the center items are removed, and the furniture is arranged for the active portion of the workshop.

Curriculum

Weekly TBC workshops began in September, 2018 and the group progressed from sketching their ideal homes, to constructing model shelters with wooden blocks, to several weeks of building with small plastic bricks. Three dedicated participants joined the lead author on a road trip to the California Institute of Earth Architecture (CalEarth) to gain inspiration for the forms the group would be proposing for its village. At this point they agreed to commence a formal curriculum, designed collaboratively, which would result in the creation of a full-scale model village and a culminating public exhibition (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Table Showing Original Curriculum Timetable

Duration	Activity
Week One	Basics: domes, arches, vaults, principles
Weeks Two and Three	Dome model building: 1”:2’ scale
Weeks Four and Five	Village planning: composition and layout
Weeks Six and Seven	Village model building: 1”:5’ scale
Week Eight	Public Exhibition

The schedule included one week of “Basics,” when the group would learn about the structural use of domes, arches and vaults, and the principles of aligning design with Earth’s systems. Weeks two and three would focus on building dome models with clay at the scale of one-inch equals two feet. In weeks four and five, the group would plan the composition and layout of their village. This plan would be translated into a full-scale model using clay, moss and other materials, at the scale of one-inch equals five feet. The public exhibition was planned for week eight, which would include public officials, neighbors, nonprofit service providers, and faculty,

staff and students from the Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies at California Polytechnic University Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona), among others. The exhibition was meant to garner interest and support for the project from the city, to establish future involvement with the University, and to attract a partnering organization for the realization of the village.

Analysis

This work was measured and validated via qualitative methods and the Flourishing Scale. Since the authors believe that the essential motivation of all human behavior is to feel appreciated and connected (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Richerson & Boyd, 1998), they chose to gauge participants' wellbeing, connection, and collective flourishing over time. Field notes and visual documentation (drawings, models) from the workshops provided data for qualitative analysis, supplemented by a group interview. Photography was used to document the participants and their projects, only during the artmaking activities, to preserve the privacy of Council. The Flourishing Scale (Diener et al, 2009) was administered during the first and last sessions to assess any changes in wellbeing and positive outlook as a result of group members' involvement in the weekly workshops.

The qualitative analysis of this applied project was structured around grounded theory methodologies (Charmaz 2014, Dey, 1999, Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Strauss and Corbin, 1998, Strauss 1987). Grounded theory is appropriate to PAR and Design Research as it emphasizes immersive observation combined with informed analysis to build understanding of social life. In an iterative process of "constant comparison" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), data from a wide array of sources

can build on emerging concepts to form theories. This analysis attempts to paint the picture of what happens for people in these collaborative processes.

The lead author maintained a journal of field notes from every group meeting, which were coded simultaneously line-by-line, using open, in vivo, and values coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). These codes were organized into categories and properties with dimensions in a code book according to the methods of Corbin and Strauss (2105). Additional insight about the dynamics of housing insecurity and the Skid Row community were gained through informal conversations, qualitative interviews with five homeless service providers, participation in public meetings and events, and review of literature. This was combined with theories of loneliness anxiety (Moustakas, 1961) and interconnection indicators from Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) to inform an axial analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz 2014).

Transcripts from the qualitative interviews were analyzed with values and verbal interaction coding. This led to expansion of the original codebook and the creation of a second, values-specific codebook. At this stage a second axial analysis led to emergent theories. Finally, the prevalent themes found in the data were used to inform Focused Coding (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016; Van den Hoonaard, 1997; Dey, 1999). [Authors' note: a concurrent publication by the authors, currently under review, focuses on the qualitative analysis of this project and includes a deep level of detail]

Participants completed the Flourishing Scale during the first week of the research period and again during its final session. The Flourishing Scale (Diener et al, 2009) measures psychological and social wellbeing with eight questions that seek reflection on one's relationships, sense of purpose, self-esteem, and other aspects that are considered universal human needs (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryan &

Deci, 2000; Flourishing Scale, n.d.). The authors chose this instrument due to its simplicity, use of non-academic language, and applicability to the topics discussed in the group's weekly workshops.

Finally, five core members of The Building Community agreed to reflect on the research process during a group discussion that was recorded for the purposes of transcription and analysis. This discussion sought to gain insight into the project's direct benefits and drawbacks, the elements that the participants most and least enjoyed, and any secondary effects that can be traced back to the members' involvement in the research. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2011) was used to identify and organize emergent ideas.

Results

Here, the authors will share the actual proceedings of The Building Community, from its use of Council, to the workshops where the curriculum was applied, and finally results of the Flourishing Scale and qualitative analysis. Results show the importance of consistency, flexibility and commitment, with an opportunity to develop a new set of tools to better capture the effects of participatory design on group wellbeing.

Council

Council represented our commitment to deep connection: even if schedules did not allow time for the creative portion of the workshop, the group requested that we sit in circle as a chance to check in and be together. In addition to topics like: places you like to spend time in, a time when you built something, a dream you have for the future, and a time you were pleasantly surprised; the group used the talking circles as a time to share their news, pressing concerns, desires and successes as

means to connect. Council became a ritual that personalized each workshop – on the occasion that time demands or scheduling conflicts did not allow for a Council circle, its absence was felt in reduced camaraderie and a utilitarian focus. The Council ritual became currency for the original and long-time members to introduce newcomers and choose the level to which they would like to assimilate them (by readily sharing details of the format or withholding them). Power relations surfaced through guidance, from gentle to abrupt, and subtle uses of tone, volume, pace, body language and expression. Compared to interactions witnessed outside of Council, those during the talking circles were generally gentler, more respectful, more light-hearted and quieter. One of the members expressed interest in pursuing training as a Council facilitator, and several shared their preference for Council over other group methodologies they have experienced. In Council, we are real, we face our emotions, share laughter and tears, and let go of everyday defenses.

Workshops

In our workshops, The Building Community enjoyed the artist's realm of experimentation, play and inquisitive problem solving. The original curriculum of art making activities was expanded from eight to twenty weeks according to necessity (See Table 3.2 and Discussion section for further detail). During the two-week "basics" period, the group watched CalEarth's online instructional videos for dome building, passive strategies and permaculture principles. However, the videos did not capture the members' attention, which led the lead author to appreciate how tuned in they were to her demonstrations and in-person activities. They practiced drawing circles with compasses, and a method that the lead author improvised with string, beads and pencils (that did not work very well). They learned about arches using wooden forms and stacks of "book bricks" (Figure 3.1). As a lighter, cleaner

and readily available alternative to fired clay bricks, the book bricks worked to create the shape but repeatedly collapsed when the forms were removed, leaving the group in laughter and exasperation. In the individual dome building section, each member replicated the Superadobe earthbag technique in coiled terracotta clay domes over the course of four weeks (Figure 3.2). The group found humor in their failed attempts to attach the coils correctly, which resulted in crumbled models from one week to the next until we ended up with a few survivors.

A corporate construction project manager joined The Building Community to begin the village-planning curriculum. The group arranged the furniture in the community room to feel out the appropriate size of an individual shelter, landing on a ten-foot diameter dome. The arch forms turned out to have the proportions of a nearby parking lot, so we used it as a guide for the village blueprint. We cut paper circles to determine the number of units that could comfortably fit in the space and played around with the layout (Figure 3.3). This initial conversation involved practicalities like access to facilities, plumbing and electricity infrastructure, entrance policies, security and social dynamics between age and gender groups. The group learned that most shelters require parents to be married in order to room with their children, which led to a re-design of the village during the second week to include family shelters. More residents joined the group for these discussions and showed their keen awareness of what is needed for a successful village, due to their direct experiences of living on the streets, emergency shelters, and transitional housing. The final design included: fifteen individual sized units for singles or couples; ten double-sized shelters for families with children; restroom trailers throughout; separate shower trailers for men, women and families; a large community center; a produce garden; a playground; greenery; and plenty of places to sit throughout (Figure 3.4).

During the next four weeks, the group created model shelters for the village, hand-building with terracotta clay over plastic half-spheres (Figure 3.5). This process was surprisingly challenging, as the group members enjoyed handling the clay so much that it would dry out and lose plasticity, and the thickness of the slabs varied greatly from too thin to too thick. We followed this with in-depth planning of a community center with on-site services, a clinic, a full kitchen, locking cabinets and refrigerators, and flexible entertainment space (Figure 3.6). Finally, the group created model facility trailers with Styrofoam and cardboard. The lead author completed the village model in her art studio (Figure 3.7).

The Building Community spent four weeks scouting for a location to hold their event, and preparing communications materials. They each contributed research and visited locations as a group. In our travels it was clear that the group members did not feel comfortable speaking directly with local business owners. The lead author modeled interactions and encouraged her TBC friends to step forward until they became comfortable and confident in the conversations. A website (https://www.the-building-community.org) was created with pages for three core member profiles and a professional photographer volunteered to take their portraits. The images captured their emotional transitions from the protective-defensive expressions they offer strangers to the gentle trusting laughter they share with our group (as they responded to the lead author's silly expressions from behind the photographer). Each of these three most invested members received personalized business cards – their first – for which they expressed pride. The group began to write biographies for their web pages but this exercise that is familiar to office workers is brand new and challenging to the group members: we will dedicate more time to the activity at a later date.

Even though the experimental methods were not always functionally successful, the group members proved supportive, flexible, and good-humored, and the premise of the lessons came across. The facilitator responded to her co-participants' enthusiasm and regularly invited their feedback and suggestions to help evolve the process. Conversation during the hands-on workshops ranged from playful to gossipy, from discussion of everyday challenges to deep discourse on the complexity and implications of their project. As group members' needs emerged, they brainstormed ways The Building Community could meet them, including construction training and licensing, income from art sales, and networking through the website. The group discussed the process and benefits of forming a nonprofit organization, building partnerships and finding funding. In time, the group envisions providing community-building services to groups in other neighborhoods around Los Angeles and beyond. Each member has requested a future role that suits their natural involvement in the project, such as foreman, driver, and builder.

Table 3.2. Table Showing Actual Curriculum Timetable

Duration	Activity
Weeks One and Two	Basics: domes, vaults, passive strategies, permaculture principles, using a compass, "book brick" arch building
Weeks Three - Six	Dome model building: 1": 2' scale
Weeks Seven and Eight	Village planning: composition and layout
Weeks Nine - Twelve	Village model building: 1": 5' scale
Week Thirteen	Community center planning
Week Fourteen	Facility trailer model building
Weeks Fifteen – Eighteen	Event location research and scouting
Week Nineteen	Collaborative work on promotional materials
Week Twenty	Public Exhibition at Los Angeles City Hall

Figure 3.1. "Book Brick" Arch Building

Figure 3.2. Dome Building: 1": 2' Scale

Figure 3.3. Village Planning: Composition and Layout

Figure 3.4. Final Village Plan

Figure 3.5. Village Model Building: 1”: 5’ Scale

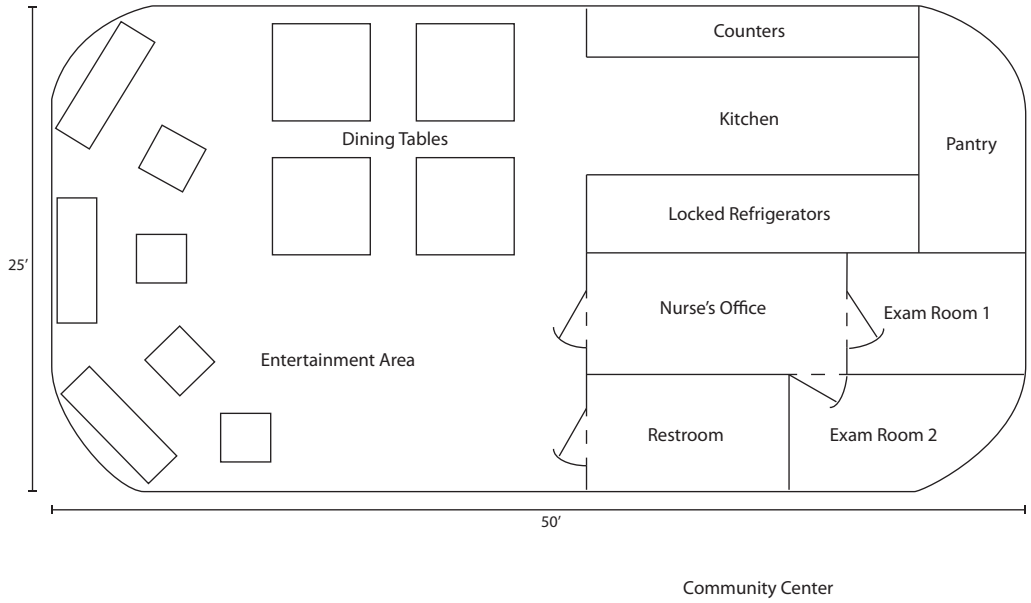


Figure 3.6. Community Center Plan

Figure 3.7. Completed Village Model

Exhibition

The Building Community was invited to present their village model and plans at a conference of the United Nations Council for Women, on Displacement and Belonging in Los Angeles. Three core resident members attended the conference along with the lead author, who had created a poster board and handouts for the

event (Figure 3.8). The members represented the project to attendees and found them to be welcoming, open and friendly. Many booth visitors expressed enthusiasm for the project and The Building Community received invitations to visit two other neighborhoods to help them start similar projects (Figure 3.9). The experience of the UN event prompted pride and deeper commitment from the members who attended.

Figure 3.8. UN Conference Display

Figure 3.9. Visitors at TBC Booth

The group also displayed its models and drawings at an exhibition at Los Angeles City Hall on August 1, 2019. They printed postcard invitations and visited each of the City's fourteen district offices twice to encourage council members to attend the event. For two hours, the exhibition took advantage of a whole conference room, with promotional tee shirts, stickers and bookmarks, catered snacks, a monitor showing CalEarth videos and binders full of precedent tiny home villages for the homeless, in addition to the models and drawings (Figures 3.10 and 3.11). Unfortunately no city official attended The Building Community's event. The experience was at once dignifying and confounding for group members. TBC attended several committee sessions afterward and one in-person meeting with city staff in order to attract more support.

Figure 3.10. Los Angeles City Hall Exhibition: Model Display

Figure 3.11. Los Angeles City Hall Exhibition: Precedence, Video and Merchandise

Evaluation

Six individuals completed the Flourishing Scale during the initial workshop of the research period, and another six were present to fill out the follow-up survey. However, only four of these individuals were present for both the initial and follow-up assessments and will be counted for this paper (Figure 3.12). Out of a possible score range of 8 to 56 on the initial assessment: one of the respondents received the highest possible score, or 56 points; two scored 55 and the fourth received a 53; suggesting that each individual already possessed a high level of psychological resources and strengths. Total follow-up scores varied more widely: 40, 53, 54, and 56. Between the two assessments, participant one reduced his or her score by 15 points, participant two's score fell 3 points, and participants three and four each saw increases of one point. In keeping with the overall initial scores, all participants rated themselves between a 6, "Agree," and 7, "Strongly agree," on each of the 8 instrument measures during the initial assessment (Figure 3.13). This remained true for the follow-up survey, with the exception of one participant who self-assessed a score of 5, "Slightly agree," in every category (Figure 3.14).

These variable results are congruous with the lead author's observations and qualitative analysis of weekly TBC workshops. Resident members regularly experienced visible shifts in mood that are often openly shared and discussed in the group, or which manifest in tone, pace, body language, abstinence/resistance, or physical absence. The authors' informed opinion is that the Flourishing Scale alone cannot accurately capture the effects of participants' involvement in TBC, as the weekly workshops are one aspect of the landscape of complex, intersectional challenges that every resident member navigates on a daily basis. Further research may incorporate more frequent applications of the scale (perhaps monthly) in combination with additional tools that may reveal a more complete understanding of members' fluctuations and any visible trends over time.

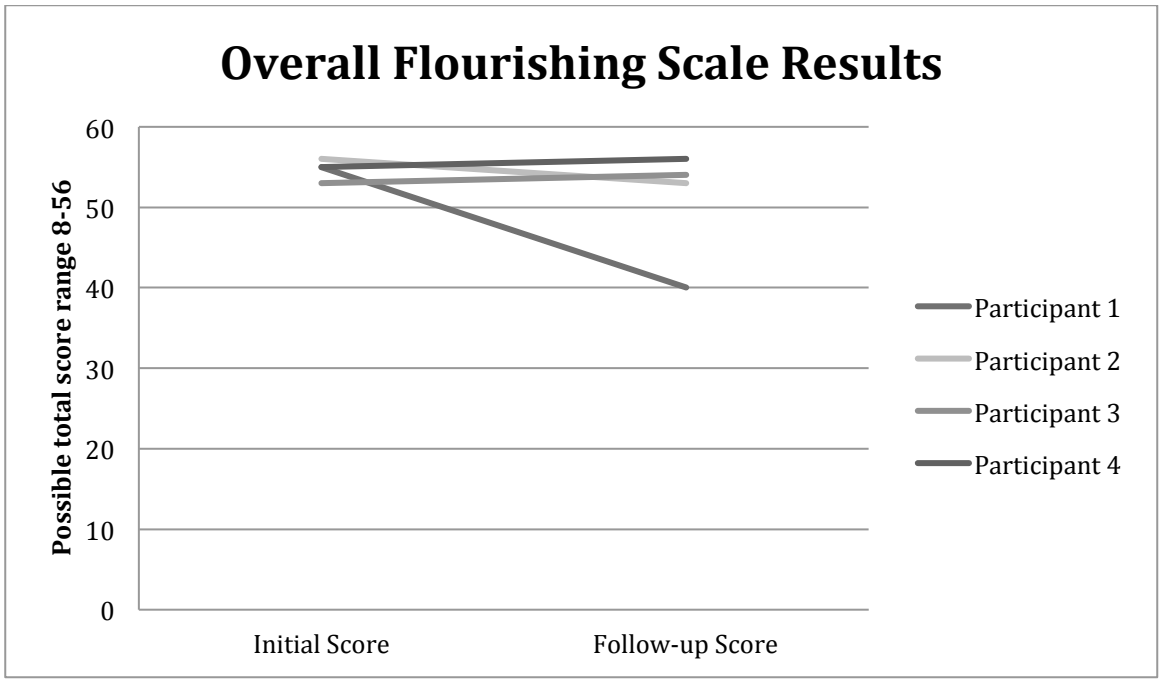


Figure 3.12. Chart Showing Total Flourishing Scale Results for Both Initial and Follow-Up Assessments

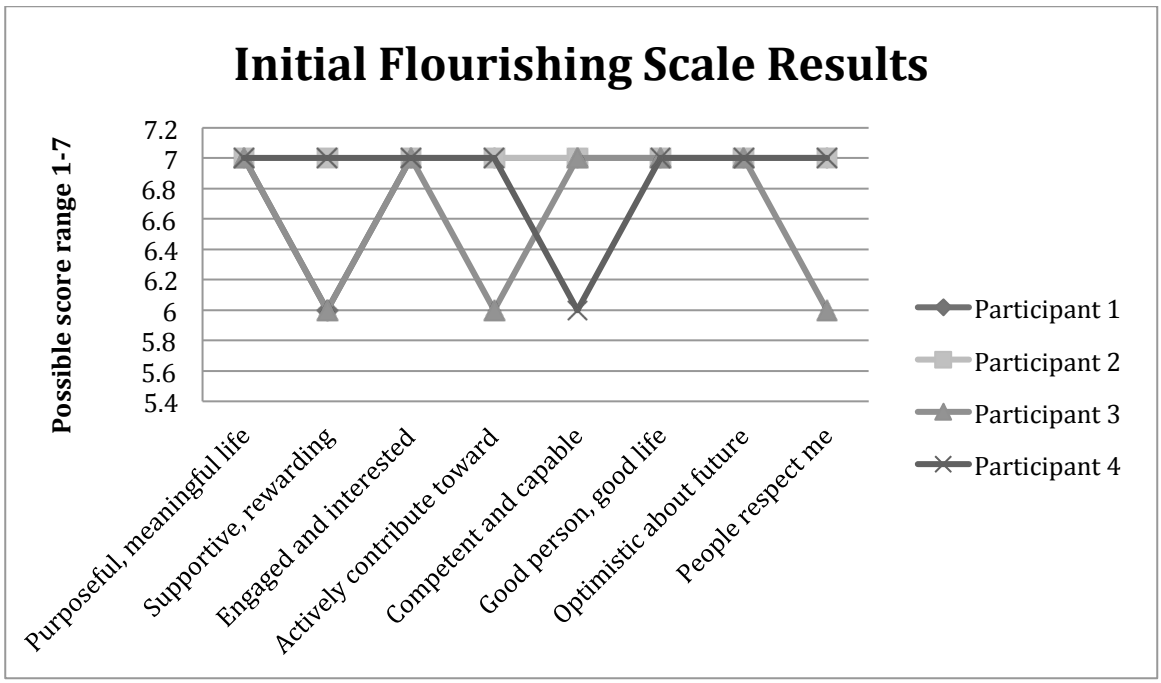


Figure 3.13. Chart Showing Initial Flourishing Scale Results

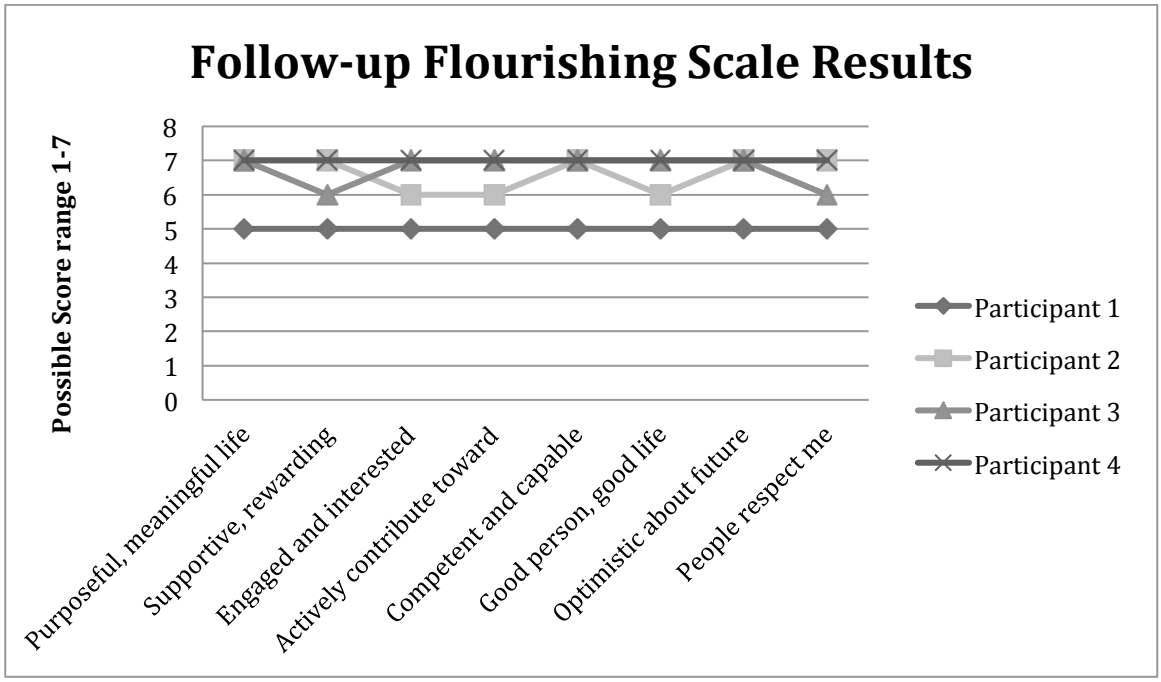


Figure 3.14. Chart Showing Follow-Up Flourishing Scale Results

Qualitative Data Analysis

The authors will not go into great detail here on the results of the qualitative analysis of this project, as a concurrent publication (Falstad and Cloutier, In Review) focuses on this aspect in depth. However, much evidence was found supporting the intention to actively build connection across differences during both the Council circles and arts-based portions of the weekly workshops. Council directly nourished connection with its foundational principles of listening and speaking from the heart, in addition to topics like talking about connection and disconnection, ways to connect, and stories about connection, among many others. Data emerged about the acts of building connection and creating distance through subtle exchanges, verbal and physical dynamics, and the extent to which group members "went the distance," followed through, showed up, and shared power. Interviews with homeless service providers revealed that the most successful relationships they have witnessed between volunteers and participants optimize the emergent value category of "right relation," which includes accountability, kindness, loyalty and openness. Other prevalent interpersonal values in successful relationships included responsiveness, generosity, compassion, humility, solidarity, fairness, righteousness and temperance. Axial analyses resulted in the following emergent ideas: ritual distributes effort and power, connection is a fluid state, ritual as fast forward, sustainability is values-centricity, and effort-connection feedback.

Group Discussion

Three core members of The Building Community participated in a reflective group discussion four weeks after the Los Angeles City Hall exhibition. [*Note: the authors will use the pronouns they, them and theirs to protect the members' privacy]* Members were asked how they feel overall about the work that the group had been

doing, and they each responded favorably – that they think it's a good idea, helpful for people experiencing homelessness, and important because people really need help. When asked if the project had made any difference in their lives, each member remarked that their perspectives of the homelessness situation has grown deeper or wider, in addition to their first-hand experience, to learn how they can help, and that every person matters. To expand on the idea of "change of heart" that the prior question prompted, the members shared new understandings of the many complicated reasons people become homeless and/or choose to remain un-housed, the deep effects of mental illness and trauma, and the difficulties associated with aging out of the foster care system and learning how to survive. Members were asked if the project had made a difference in their outlook or moods: two responded that their moods improved because they're happy to be a part of it, to socialize and meet new people; the third member shared that TBC was their favorite of all the groups they take part in through their supportive housing program because it is the only one that doesn't dwell on mental health, drugs and triggers, and that the facilitator stays on the same level as everyone else. While it was sad for one member to learn more about the homelessness crisis, they feel increasingly better as the group has been proceeding in its plans and putting their energy forward to make a difference.

The facilitator shared that connecting with the group had made a difference in her own life as someone who had been experiencing isolation as well as frustration and sadness around the homelessness situation in their neighborhood. One member responded that the group accepts and loves her, another agreed and added that the group is "good energy," and the third expanded that it was important the facilitator followed through ("she ain't bullshittin'), and added that they appreciated how she reversed people's criticisms into constructive feedback.

When asked what the members enjoyed most about their work together in TBC, all three mentioned coming together for group conversations, two mentioned meeting different people, one brought up participating in events, and another highlighted the hands-on aspect. They were asked what they would change about TBC, and every member agreed that things were going very well – one wished they could get started building the village, and another would like to see more people join the group. Finally, the members were asked to share their hopes for the future of TBC: each expressed their hopes for the tiny home village to be successful; one member shared their concerns for traumatized women who may live there, people who may decide to use drugs in the public bathrooms, how to support chronically homeless individuals to learn a new way of life, and how to build a budget large enough to provide for the things people will need for growth (like job training and clothing); another hoped that the village would inspire people on the street to change their minds and seek housing.

Discussion

The intimate size of this study allowed for the establishment of trust and connection, with time for close attention to members' needs, reactions and unspoken communication. The process can be replicated with other small local groups, and lessons from parallel projects can be aggregated to reveal broader trends. As many fields inform participatory methods, there is a chance that valuable or similar contributions may have been overlooked. Ongoing review will reduce this risk in future research, while the span of creative tools and flexibility will be retained.

Several aspects of this project were surprising as unexpected developments, outcomes, and secondary effects. First was the fluid nature of the project in its ability to serve the pressing needs of group members. As the group built a strong

foundation of trust and respect, each participant cared for the concerns of the others and felt free to share their own challenges and desires. In response to particular conversations, the group decided to include member profiles and a shop for artisan goods on their website, to seek training and certifications for construction and earth building skills, to create member business cards, and to develop income-earning opportunities as community-building consultants. The core members' dedication to TBC led them to envision personalized leadership roles for themselves and steered the lead author to provide capacity-building guidance and to "go the extra mile" as encouragement. Participants easily grasped the connections between inequality, isolation and sustainability, and contributed insight to the design process toward reducing resource consumption and waste. The most fundamental surprise was how quickly the group perceived and appreciated the village project as a way to "give back" to those who are still living on the streets.

Unpredictability has been the biggest challenge facing TBC throughout this project. Workshop attendance swung widely from one to fifteen members, with a shifting core of three to five dedicated participants. Attendance is completely voluntary and contingent on many variables, such as members' states of mind, the weather (which affects mood), substance use, illness, and the precarious reality of members' ability to meet basic needs. Appointments at health clinics and social work offices would sometimes conflict, as would phone calls to negotiate benefits or set up food delivery services; sometimes members would simply need to run time-sensitive errands. An individual might attend for the first time and genuinely enjoy their experience of the group, but then fall back into addiction or otherwise abstain. Others participated in phases as they shifted in and out of mental and physical stability. Several weekly meetings were canceled due to last-minute displacement from the community room by building management, community meetings and staff

trainings. Wi-Fi service in the building was also unpredictable, causing planned group activities to shift on the fly and one meeting to be relocated to a nearby café (with sub-optimal sound environment). The best response to these challenges has been "going with the flow," as flexibility and attentiveness were shown to build connection and any attempt to sacrifice comfort for timeliness was met with reduced collegiality.

What became apparent was the depth of the difference in life experience between the resident TBC members and their peers who are living in market-rate Los Angeles housing, with advanced degrees and employment in technology or other sectors. To remain living in the supportive housing program, residents' income must not exceed a very low threshold – even a part time service industry job would push them into the world where rent for an equivalent apartment is generally twenty-four times higher than what they are currently asked to pay. We talked about these disparities openly and without resentment, as realities of different life circumstances and decisions coupled with a system that does not go out of its way to level the playing field. Our time together goes beyond activities to provide the encouragement, patience and practical information that the members need to refine and achieve their aspirations.

Conclusion

At the time of this publication, The Building Community is applying for 501(c)3 nonprofit certification and collaboratively recruiting trustees. The group has been invited to lead a public discussion on homelessness and transitional housing in another Los Angeles neighborhood, in partnership with a college and a grassroots community group. TBC is seeking funding to send core members to Cal-Earth for a dome-building workshop and is working with an architect to plan future trainings.

They do not yet have a site to build their village. The authors recognize the urgency to build the organization in order to retain the enthusiasm and commitment of TBC group members, and to leverage current funding opportunities for innovative transitional supportive housing in Los Angeles. TBC has proposed partnership with a longstanding homeless service provider and the lead author continues to visit city and county officials to garner support for the project.

This project has implications for future community-based sustainability research. While the emphasis must remain on the particular needs, desires, challenges and opportunities of a given location, the collective, participatory and qualitative methodologies are transferable. Any one aspect of the project, from Council circles to arts-based workshops and group dialogues, can be beneficial toward developing shared sustainable practices and goals while building trust and connection in a community. The foundation of trust allows neighbors to transcend the status quo and co-create a better future.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has presented a three-part view into the emergence of an applied Sustainability arts-based research practice. I have shared a Criticality Index that can be used as a framework to guide ethical community-based research. A review of Action Research case studies provided insight into the field's contemporary strengths along with opportunities to further support community efforts toward justice, equity, peace and transformation. Next, I described a structured analysis of loneliness and connection across perceived differences using qualitative methods, providing practical suggestions for researchers who seek to encourage interconnectedness. Finally, the process of creating the TBC method, forming The Building Community group and implementing a twelve-month program of participatory design and dialogue illustrated a site-specific response to homelessness and unsustainability.

This research reveals an opportunity to search for connection between sense of belonging and the adoption of sustainable practices. Might stronger social networks open people up for larger changes in their habits, lifestyles, transportation and surroundings? If there is a relationship, is it also dependent on healing from trauma and past or current injustices? Another potential for further research is to explore whether concurrent community-based sustainability projects using participatory design and dialogue could make a regional impact on collective wellbeing and socioeconomic equity. The Building Community is intended to become a networked system of local efforts, each responding to unique social, economic and ecological conditions. Researchers and practitioners will have the chance to share successes, failures, resources, and larger lessons that span geography.

I would like to leave you with the continuation of this poem that I have written to uplift our common heart, as researchers and fellow creatures of this ever-changing world.

We may feel we need to learn how to interact safely – how to navigate the complicated layers of structure, accumulation, defense and protection, in order to be of service in this world. But the learning is in the letting go. It is learning together: it is in the listening, the seeing, and the laughter.

We don't need to wait until we have it all figured out, as the earth continues to suffocate and the tides of separation grow stronger between us. We can start now, to be imperfect together, and admit that we don't know.

Every person holds a key perspective to view the guide posts in our trees, our oceans, each other. We just need to make space to allow each other room, to listen beyond ourselves and take our place in the greater system of life on this planet – a system that we could never control.

A sustainable society is one that balances needs and desires, in structures that allow the Earth's systems and species to thrive. One that accepts the basic tenets: to share – and love thy neighbor.

As an interconnected network of hyper-local realities, we can re-organize our life on this planet. We can heal the earth and allow it to breathe. We can learn to forgive and allow the next visions to emerge through a space of innocence.

The system is our story and we can tell it differently. The new story can be found through my embodiment: I am calling on you to join me.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF ACTION RESEARCH ARTICLES ASSESSED FOR CHAPTER TWO

Ahlberg, B. M, F. Maina, A. Kubai, W. Khamasi, M. Ekman, & C. Lundqvist-Persson. (2016). ''A child, a tree'': Challenges in building collaborative relations in a community research project in a Kenyan context. *Action Research*. 14(3): 257-275.

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APPENDIX B

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED MATERIAL AND CO-AUTHOR PERMISSION

- Chapter 2 is in preparation for submission to the peer-reviewed journal Sustainability.
- Chapter 3 is in preparation for submission to the peer-reviewed journal International Review of Qualitative Research.
- Chapter 4 is in preparation for submission to the peer-reviewed Journal of Action Research.
- All co-authors have granted their permission for the use of this material in this dissertation.

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL FORM

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Scott Cloutier
Sustainability, School of
-
Scott.Cloutier@asu.edu

Dear Scott Cloutier:

On 4/2/2019 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Creating the World We Want to Live in: Reconnecting for a Sustainable Future
Investigator:	Scott Cloutier
IRB ID:	STUDY00009524
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• BAM Reconnecting Workshop Plans.pdf, Category: Other (to reflect anything not captured above); • Flourishing Scale.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • BAM Reconnecting Interview Guide.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • BAM Reconnecting IRB Protocol.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • BAM Reconnecting Recruitment script.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • BAM Reconnecting Consent form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 4/2/2019.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Beth Ann Morrison
Scott Cloutier
Beth Ann Morrison

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Title of research study: Creating the World We Want to Live in: Reconnecting for a Sustainable Future

Investigator: Professor Scott Cloutier

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

You are being asked to take part in a research study of the ways that people connect across divides in urban settings. We are asking you to take part because you have verbally agreed. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to learn how individuals in downtown Los Angeles build and maintain social connection and interdependence across perceived divides. Research has shown that there is a direct link between sense of place and social capital in cities. As loneliness and inequity are major problems in the US, we seek to gain understanding on the ways that people build bridges.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to share your thoughts about connection between volunteers and residents in downtown Los Angeles during either a formal one-hour interview with the researcher or informal group discussion(s) with other participants, including the researcher(s). You are also invited to take part in 8 weekly hands-on creative workshops that will each last approximately 2 hours, in which we will imagine future ideas for the city and create them with drawings and models. Workshop participants will be asked to complete a brief survey on their wellbeing and positivity at the start of the research period, and again at its completion.

What will you do with my information?

Your comments will contribute to a deeper understanding of how and why people form lasting bonds across differences, so that we might encourage more neighbors to support the Skid Row community with their time, energy and resources. We will also get a sense of whether creative group projects might improve participants' sense of wellbeing and positive outlook. The researchers will not share any personal information, results of the surveys will be anonymous, and any shared information from interviews or workshops will be edited to protect the privacy of all involved. Photographed documentation of the drawings, models and work sessions will contribute to the researchers' understanding, and may be published with your permission.

How will the recordings be used?

We are also asking your permission to audio record the formal interviews. Only the research team will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted immediately after being transcribed and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity,

please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded and I will stop.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about fifteen people will participate in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. You may request that any part of the conversation be omitted from records, or that the researchers leave the room during a sensitive topic.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time, it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There is a minor risk that you may be self-conscious that our activities and conversations will be analyzed. The researchers will make every effort to be unobtrusive and respectful of your privacy.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the University board that reviews research who want to make sure the researchers are doing their jobs correctly and protecting your information and rights. The data collected during this study will be stored on a secure hard drive for approximately six months before it is destroyed.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to the research team, Beth Ann Morrison and Professor Scott Cloutier. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Beth Ann Morrison at Bethann.Morrison@asu.edu or at 1-201-650-1878. You can reach Prof. Cloutier at Scott.Cloutier@asu.edu. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

By signing here, you are giving the researchers permission to use photographs of you and your creative workshop projects: _____

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of participant	Date
Printed name of participant	
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent	

APPENDIX E

FLOURISHING SCALE

FLOURISHING SCALE

Below are 8 statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by indicating that response for each statement.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

____ I lead a purposeful and meaningful life

____ My social relationships are supportive and rewarding

____ I am engaged and interested in my daily activities

____ I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others

____ I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me

____ I am a good person and live a good life

____ I am optimistic about my future

____ People respect me

Scoring:

Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest PWB possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Beth Ann Morrison
Dr. Scott Cloutier
Interview Guide

Creating the World We Want to Live in: Reconnecting for a Sustainable Future

1. What usually prompts people to become volunteers with your organization?

2. How does it look when volunteers and community members you're serving start to connect?

3. What kinds of changes have you seen in both community members and volunteers as a result of the relationships they develop?

4. What are some of the challenges that volunteers and community members experience as they begin to establish relationship?

5. What are some of the benefits you've seen volunteers and community members gain as a result of the relationships they develop?

6. What are some of the outcomes you've witnessed after volunteers and community members have established relationship?

7. What has to happen for a volunteer to commit to deeper involvement in the community?